# QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON SURVIVORS OF CROSS-BORDER TRAFFICKING IN INDIA, BANGLADESH AND NEPAL
# (JULY 2013 - DECEMBER 2014)

# DISCLOSURE

*'When I see other's sorrow, struggling and survival for life, then such things give me inspiration to survive and control my body, mind and relation'* (Sapana, a survivor from Nepal)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The phenomenon of cross border trafficking in children between Bangladesh and India is well established through empirical evidence of girls and women being rescued from situations of slavery, servitude and bondage. Arguably, this is a sub-set of a larger population of children and adults who migrate from Bangladesh for economic and social reasons, not all of whom are trafficked. The available evidence on child trafficking overwhelmingly substantiates the phenomena of sex trafficking in girls, and evidence based on labour trafficking in boys and girls is sparse and under-researched. Children are reported to have been trafficked by family members and relatives, neighbours or people known and trusted by victims and their families, with lure of jobs, better opportunities and life. Researchers and service providers who work with rescued victims have reported little on routes, methods or modes of transportation or described the nature of torture used with victims to force them into sexual or labour slavery and bondage. There is an overall lack of qualitative analysis on victims' experiences of being trafficked and exploited, the nature of deception, coercion, control, force or abuse used by traffickers prior to, or during trafficking, or the nature of violence used to force victims into slavery and bondage, and the impacts thereof. This impedes response of recovery services by State or private service providers as well as prosecution by the State parties, and makes it difficult to assess effectiveness or impact of services that aim at healing and empowering victims or assist them seeking justice through the criminal justice system.

✓ **Objectives:** The overall objective of the research is to explore the journey of survivors from cross-border trafficking from Nepal and Bangladesh to India in order to better understand protective and damaging mechanisms inherent to trafficking, rescue and rehabilitation. The main objectives are: i) To identify points of intervention to support girls whose vulnerabilities place them at a higher risk of being trafficked; ii) To prevent child trafficking by identifying risk inducing processes within families dealing with their vulnerabilities; iii) To develop knowledge that can sensitise vulnerable girls and girls in transit to be aware of risk of being trafficked, in order to enable them to seek help while being transported; iv) To understand the nature of exploitation in order to identify protective factors within an exploitative system and indicators that can help shape rehabilitation post-rescue; v) To understand a survivor's construction of 'normal life' post-rescue.

✓ **Method:** A qualitative psychosocial framework was favoured as it allows studying individuals' thoughts and behaviours and their interrelation with their environment through interpersonal relationships. 13 survivors of trafficking – 3 from Nepal and 10 from Bangladesh participated in this research. During six sessions, participants were interviewed about their life experience from childhood, through trafficking till today's life. Throughout the sessions, data were collected with a semi-structured interview, questionnaires and pictorial methods. The research process was also participative by nature as participants would give their feedback on the methodology as well as the results.

✓ **Results:** Vulnerabilities to trafficking are multi-layered and mainstreamed through survivors' life before trafficking. Observable as well as hidden vulnerabilities play a role in weakening family dynamics and enhancing child's vulnerability to trafficking. The decision making is usually an individual as well as a collective process which will further bring guilt, shame and self-stigma. After the girl is targeted by the trafficker, she becomes part of a manipulative system which is mostly coercive and which takes away or diminishes her will and/or ability to seek help. Exploitation is systemic by nature and the active as well as passive participation of trafficked victims to those systems influence the way they deal with daily life and their rescue and/or escape from that life. Post-rescue life lies upon social support, family support, social and self-stigma, their inner capacity to heal their wounds and build their future.

✓ **Conclusion:** New perspectives on cross-border trafficking in children have been drawn from this present research. The results support the need to assess effectiveness or impact of services that aim at healing and empowering victims or assist them seeking justice through the criminal justice system.

# ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

# PREFACE

It is very hard to be disruptive. To disrupt an existing system and a status quo no matter how incomplete it may be. One always feels guilty of disrupting what is. It doesn't bring too many friends. For all that there is in the anti-trafficking sector, it comprises of people, agencies and authorities, who are doing their best with the available resources, capacity and intent. Their ideologies and motivation and every once in a while one looks hard for stories which confirm this conviction that these efforts are meaningful, sensible and they have an impact on the lives of children and women who have been victims of grave injustices. It is an opportunity however to examine the status quo and to question ourselves 'is it really making sense? Doing what we are doing, day after day, year after year.'

It takes courage to bare ourselves naked and look at the mirror. These nine months that this research has taken, has provoked many questions, doubts, fears, hopelessness, despair at many points of time, when one is confronted by a young Amal or an older Jamila. It is hard to understand the system and its intent from their experiences, because it does not explain the deep disconnect between the system (be it family, community or State) and these girls, who were born into it, belonged to it, wished for protection and safety from it – and were denied, and were ejected from their primary and secondary systems (families and communities) into another system – of sex work, wherein they were held in captivity and servitude, to earn profit for a while range of stakeholders. Knowing that their stories are unique but not rare, and that there are around 3 million such unique stories, which point to a systemic betrayal and failure, is hard and painful.

Disclosure is a deep psychological research that aimed to learn about resilience among survivors of sex trafficking. It presents to the reader a view into the lives of survivors – who they are, what resources they have found in their lives and about people attached to them be it their families, friends, community, social workers, and agents for the state. The research traces a survivor's continuum of victimhood and survival – participants are some who were never 'rescued' but who had moved from servitude to autonomy, others who escaped on their own, escaped with help of NGO or police, living in shelter home, living with their family or living independently.

While the aim of this research is to inform the Missing Child Alert Programme that is designed and implemented by Plan International in collaboration with SAIEVAC, the governments and NGOs across Bangladesh, India and Nepal, and many other collaborators, this research may be of interest to academics, other activists both within and outside the region, psychologists and researchers.

Therefore, we present Disclosure as not a research about self-flagellation of the anti-trafficking sector but an honest and a painful dialogue between the State and its citizens who are amongst the most disadvantaged, violated and betrayed. What may make it meaningful is that we listen without judgment, we hear without feeling accused, and we receive without conditions. We believe that if we are able to do so, we find answers of questions, solutions for problems from the 13 participants

of this research who have so generously offered their resources for the benefit of people like them and thousands and millions of other children who might end up like them if we don't act now.

# INTRODUCTION

## MISSING CHILDREN: UNDERSTANDING THEIR WORLD

Studying missing children means studying life contexts of millions of children. Those children who have left home voluntarily or by force may have remained in their home country or they may have crossed the border, or smuggled across, of their country of origin. Among them are, runaway children, children living in the streets (P. Ray, Davey, & Nolan, 2011), children exploited for labour (Diallo, Etienne, & Mehran, 2013) (International Labour Office, 2013). Categorizing missing children shows the necessity to describe those children according to the causes, the means, or even the outcomes in order to better understand their place in the world[1].

There is much that is not known when it comes to understanding the phenomenon of missing children, particularly in South Asia. The phenomenon is partly visible – when we find children living on streets and railway stations and children who are found in brothels and sweatshops - but often invisible when we go to the communities, villages and states they originate from. Social workers who work with children living on streets, children rescued from servitude, sexual exploitation and bonded labour, have a wealth of information, knowledge and insights about the context of the children they work with, and most researches that inquire causality or impact on children leaving homes, have indicated push factors (conditions of deprivation and abuse at home, community and educational or other institutions, lack of social, economic opportunities or protection services) or pull factors (aspirations for a better life, hopes of income and opportunities), that may have led to children leaving homes. Such leaving home may have occurred with or without their families' direct involvement and support, whether they may have migrated or been smuggled or trafficked. However, given that the percentage of missing children in their communities is a small fraction (an assumption) compared to the total population of children belonging to same or similar psycho-social conditions, similar socio-demographic and cultural profile, who may not be kidnapped or abducted to be trafficked, or who may not be subject to forced migrations, researchers strive to find out what determines vulnerability in children, whether and to what extent it may be incidental or peculiar to a particular child, to therefore understand what strategic responses may be designed in the short and longer terms for effective impact.

However in context of developing economies such deprivations or push factors are widespread, therefore there must be vulnerabilities that put certain children at a greater risk of going missing. Identifying such vulnerabilities that differentiates a missing child from other children living in similar conditions of impoverishment but not missing can assist in designing strategic responses to combat this increasingly disturbing phenomenon.

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[1] As described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989): 'a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'.

A missing child belongs to a vast universe that can be broadly categorised for the sake of clarity in terms of children who leave home with information and children who leave without information. Here information denotes knowledge of where they are migrating to and for what purpose. Children who leave home with information would include migration for better opportunities in education or employment – runaway children, while children who leave home without information would be those who are kidnapped, abducted and trafficked. In fact children who leave home with information may also be trafficked in the course of their journey. Another category of children are those girls who elope in order to avoid being married to boys or men chosen by their families, who may eventually be trafficked as well.

Whatever the reason that leads to children going missing, it is important to recognise that such children live in socio-cultural contexts that are not very different from other children who remain in the community with their families. The specific vulnerabilities that place a child at a greater risk of going missing need to be identified in order to develop strategies to combat this increasingly disturbing phenomenon. Given the vast nature of their world it is pragmatic to assume that such vulnerabilities or risk factors could be similar for certain categories of missing children while being totally different for some other category of missing children. For example, children who are kidnapped may not necessarily belong to poor socio-economic sections; contrarily they might be kidnapped for a ransom, indicating their family's relative affluence. Hence it is difficult to generalise and state that a standard set of variables will be risk factors that contribute to children going missing. It depends on a complex interaction of various variables that adds to the challenge of designing a programme to respond to this issue.

## PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S PURPOSE

This research is part of a larger regional initiative called the Missing Child Alert (MCA) Programme that has been designed and implemented by Plan International and other NGOs through partnership. The larger domain of this programme is to look at 'missing children' as a total universe and study what might help early identification, interception, rescue and rehabilitation of these children. The indication is that existing services are falling short of curbing this phenomenon, which means that there is scope for improving, changing and developing technologies and methodologies to tackle this issue. What kind of solutions would be more appropriate to help communities address their vulnerabilities? What kind of solutions may actually be useful for families and communities from where children may go missing? What kind of solutions can enable the state to respond with help for such children, families and communities? The voices of survivors have been passive in this endeavour of seeking solutions. Therefore Plan wanted to know through an in depth qualitative study on vulnerability and impact of trafficking on children, in order to make the programme more responsive to the needs of the target group.

## CHANGE MANTRAS' CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

To study the entire world of Missing Children would be yet another exercise in generalising the phenomenon and failing to highlight the specific vulnerabilities and trajectories those define various pathways taken by the missing children. Therefore it was important to narrow the focus of the research for conducting an in depth study and come up with specialised knowledge that could be used for strategizing. Moreover the focus needed to be relevant for the South Asian region. Considering these concerns, Change Mantras proposed a qualitative study of trafficked children as part of the larger universe of Missing Children.

Within human trafficking, child trafficking is one form of slavery where children are being sexually and commercially exploited by traffickers, worldwide (UNODC, 2012). When it comes to cross border mobility in children between Bangladesh, India and Nepal, the strongest trend that involves the worst forms of violence against children is that of trafficking in children. The phenomenon of trans-national trafficking cross border trafficking in children between Bangladesh and India is well established through empirical evidence of girls and women being rescued from situations of slavery, servitude and bondage (Sen & Nair, 2004) (Développement, 2006) and is a sub-population of a larger population (including single migrant children) that migrate informally for social and economic reasons (UNODC, 2011). Available child trafficking reports an impetus in sex trafficking in girls while the evidence base on labour trafficking in boys and girls is sparse and under-researched (Sanjog & Groupe Développement, 2011). Adolescents are reported to have been trafficked by 'the known and the trusted' by victims and their families, with lure of jobs, better opportunities and life. Researchers have tried to explore on routes, methods or modes of transportation (Barthwal-Datta, 2012) (Troubnikoff, 2003) or described the nature of torture used with victims to force them into sexual or labour slavery and bondage (Farley, 2006).

While the significance of cross border trafficking in children is well recognised, and there are significant services set up for rescue, repatriation and returning of these children to their families, there has been no major impact assessment of such services. Much more has been written and reported about the challenges in implementing programmes and challenges in service delivery, and risks of insufficient services resulting in secondary victimisation of trafficked children. However, there is absence of any substantive inquiry on victims' experiences of being trafficked and exploited, the context of vulnerability or the nature of use of deception, coercion, control, force or abuse by traffickers prior to, or during trafficking, or the nature of violence used to force victims into slavery and bondage, and the impacts thereof. This impedes victim friendly and contextually appropriate and informed strategic responses in prevention of trafficking or rehabilitation services by State or NGOs. The MCA needs to avoid reinforcing services or programme methods that may already be contrary to best interests of children, strengthen what may be currently insufficient and develop what may currently be not responded to.

When it comes to trafficking in children, the significance of this sub-phenomenon within the larger phenomenon of missing children is that it involves organised crime, spread across countries and regions within countries. Perhaps, this gap in services to victims explains why trafficked victims may not cooperate or even turn hostile in prosecution cases against traffickers, a phenomenon not only observed in India but internationally as well. The lack of an understanding on the nature of harm upon the victim makes it difficult to assess effectiveness or impact of services that aim at healing and empowering victims or assist them seeking justice through the criminal justice system (Sanjog & Groupe Développement, 2011). The MCA has basis to assume that there exists alienation between victims and the criminal justice system and survivors may not cooperate with law enforcement agencies and the prosecution for conviction of traffickers, a phenomenon that is not necessarily peculiar to this region. Given that the criminal justice system and social welfare services are equal stakeholders of the issue, the MCA needs to know what, in the rehabilitation system, may help bridging this alienation between survivors and the criminal justice system and lead to strengthening of prosecution of traffickers.

Therefore Change Mantras proposed studying cross-border child trafficking as a phenomenon under the larger universe of Missing Children in order to understand the vulnerabilities (beyond what is known), the impact of being trafficked through the diverse trafficking experiences and rehabilitation and its implication on recovery.

## RESEARCH THAT IS INNOVATIVE, PARTICIPATIVE AND ADAPTIVE

Researching child trafficking is a complex and intuitive exercise. Researches on human trafficking often consider the individual as a primary source of information. This person is supposed to know about trafficking as he/she lives within trafficking system and can testify about what happens 'inside'. Nonetheless, information is difficult to collect and correct information is considered to be even more difficult to gather. Fear for disclosing, illusion, idealization of past experiences, and trauma tend to modify the survivor's narrative. Thus, the veracity of information is versatile depending on the person who tells the story and the person who listens to it.

The participants of such research are survivors of exploitation and trauma. This implies that their narratives are not always consistent due to a high degree of resistance, repression and mistrust that can impede an inquiry method that relies on structured and quantitative techniques only. The task of identifying vulnerabilities, impact and rehabilitation needed to be broken down into various layers to glean out a coherent pattern explaining these aspects. Innovation in methodology was therefore required to capture the nuances that mark the experiences of child trafficking. If one had followed a structured questionnaire based research with this group chances of going beyond obvious and simple explanations were very high. Similarly only utilizing projective techniques ran the risk of high levels of subjectivity and researcher's bias in interpretation, given the sensitive nature of the study. Therefore the research required innovation in terms of selecting a blend of tools, preparing a methodology that is interactive and finally ensuring minimum levels of negative researcher's effect on the participants.

Since Plan had proposed the study be restricted to a very small sample of 12 participants, a qualitative methodology was best suited and is described in greater details in the Methodology section. Qualitative methodology does not necessarily mean participative, however, this research thrived on its purpose of taking an empathetic view towards existing systems and its effects, from the perspective of a trafficked person. Therefore, the research was participative and approached the trafficked person within her ecological framework that included her primary care givers, NGOs that she was associated with and her larger socio-cultural context. As the reader will find out in the research that if one treats the socio-cultural context (family, brothel, shelter-home, hostel, etc.) as a system, then one can appreciate a fair amount of variation in these systems, between systems which in turn has a large impact on whether or how a survivor will perceive her victimhood, her agency, her control, etc. and simultaneously will respond differentially to the rehabilitation process. Participation is also empowering, hence the research allowed the trafficked persons to take a lead during interviews and also edit inappropriate questions before the actual data collection and thereby participate in the research process rather than just in responding to the inquiries. Finally the research was adaptive and guided primarily by the principle of 'do no harm'. Respecting the trafficked person's self-integrity, being sensitive to the impact the research was having on the participants and responding to these insights was part of the research design.

This research aims at offering new perspectives on providing support to survivors of cross border trafficking. This research enquires information that is useful for multiple stakeholders intervening at different stage of the trafficking – prevention, rescue and rehabilitation – and participating in building one support system considering the continuum in which the survivor finds herself. We therefore attempt to give some recommendations for services providers and whomever it may concern.

## HIGHLIGHTING SYSTEMS' INTEGRATION AS AGAINST PROBLEMS WITH SYSTEMS

This research was designed in such a way that the complexities that exist in various systems that impinge on a survivor's lived reality are explored. These systems are her family, community, state systems, trafficking nexus, trafficking context, NGOs, political and social systems of destination country, etc. When a survivor recounts her experience to help the researcher understand her vulnerabilities, impact and rehabilitation, she does so from traces of memory that exist in the interaction of such systems. Therefore the present research cannot act as a compass pointing towards dysfunctional systems; rather it can describe problematic systems integrations. If this approach is not taken the research such as this will end up dumping the entire blame on the state or the family, while the actual problem lies is the spaces in which these micro and macro systems interact and integrate. The purpose of this research is to help in creating a support system that can be applied to this interaction between micro and macro systems at different levels. Hence the recommendations from this research will be useful for multiple stakeholders and can be applied at various levels depending on the stage of trafficking – prevention, rescue and rehabilitation – that is being intervened at.

Within a situation where non-state actors takes action to prevent trafficking, provide services that are suitable for survivors, what a research on child trafficking could bring to better understand the journey of children where home is elsewhere if not to shed light on various systems that assimilate and/or integrate those children. Due to the volatility of the trafficking systems, those children are more difficult to identify, to find, to target, to track, and to rescue. In fact, from emergency response system to networks of services provided, if response mechanisms are efficient for those children then they should also work for all missing children.

## FINDING HUMANITY IN INHUMANITY

Last but not least, this research aims at capturing the spirit of the trafficked person, to be able to appreciate the humanness of a person who is not just a sum of her experiences. The point is to not reduce the trafficked person just as a victim of such a grotesque phenomenon but to understand her life through her perspective, being open to listening to feelings of hope despite the overarching brutality of the experience. The research is very conscious of avoiding simplistic explanations and being overwhelmed by the inhumanity of trafficking. The research is about the trafficked person at various stages – still not rescued, living in a shelter home, reunited with family after repatriation and living independently after repatriation and the inquiry is to understand her as she actively makes sense, reacts, acts and copes with her environment.

# BACKGROUND

## STUDYING EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN TRAFFICKED FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Every day and everywhere, children migrate, flee, and move without any adults to protect them. They are kidnapped, sold and bought, exploited, threatened, etc. Children on the move are left to their own responsibilities. In the best of the situations, they become missing children which means someone looks for them and expect their coming back. As missing children, they are denied children's rights, proper health care and the protection they deserve. Their participation to the civil society is sometimes weak and often non-existent. They are living in the streets, in a brothel, in a destroyed building, unattended or confined. For those missing children who are victims of trafficking, it is crucial that we explore the multilayer systems they are trapped in. Indeed, child trafficking systems are methodical, well-organized, volatile, highly profitable and so far inevitable. For all those reasons, the present research chose to concentrate on the sub- population of trafficked children within the larger universe of Missing Children. In this sub-population, the research chose to only look at women who were trafficked as children for sexual exploitation.

For the ones who are exploited, sexual exploitation is one of the worst forms of exploitation; it is also the most difficult to study due to the hidden and hazardous character of the activities. Nonetheless, studying this category of children may bring valuable information not only for improving prevention and rehabilitation systems for children who have been victims of trafficking but also for all children who once left their home, forcibly or volitionally, and could not find their way back.

There are several reasons why only women who were trafficked as girls, across the border for sexual exploitation were chosen:

1. The phenomenon of children being trafficked for sexual exploitation is the largest that has been recorded or even documented. Therefore the rationale for choosing to study this population would mean a window into the lives of a fairly large number of Missing Children. The other common outcome of cross border trafficking is child labour. However child labour is much less visible and not as well documented because identification of cross-border trafficking for child labour is entirely dependent on the child's acknowledgement of the fact that she/he is a Bangladeshi/Nepali. The reason why children try to hide this fact, especially when they leave home on their own volition is to avoid being deported back to their homes (Sanjog & Groupe Développement, 2011).

2. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is assumed to be the worst kind of phenomenon among all that a missing child might be exposed to. It is assumed that they would suffer the worst kind of deprivation and most difficult situations or vulnerabilities in their homes and the nature of exploitation would include a range of extremities. This would be equal to or more than other Missing Children making it the most complex and comprehensive group that can be studied. The rationale is that if the strategies are targeted to improve lives of trafficked children, it has higher chances of

including all services possibly needed by Missing Children as a whole.

3. The research is based on girls who were trafficked across the border for sexual exploitation. Trafficking for sexual exploitation of boys is not well documented due to the fact that this is far more clandestine and hidden in shame in the South Asian context. This research relies on getting a stable, consistent population to participate in it, whereas it would be time consuming and extremely difficult to identify boys who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. Apart from this, girls represent the bottom of the pyramid and implication of stigma on her on account of sexual exploitation is severe. A girl child's need for rehabilitation are more complex and again would offer a far greater range of data to make our findings more comprehensive.

One unintended consequences of this methodology is that it might further reinforce the existing biases, or conflation of child trafficking with prostitution. By no means does this research wish to state that trafficking is restricted to children and that trafficking is restricted to sexual exploitation. It is just that the phenomenon, scale and visibility of trafficking of children for labour and other purpose is a newer and poorly documented phenomenon and for the purpose of this study, this is what Plan International and Change Mantras agreed on. Having said this, the need to commission more studies on cross border trafficking of children for labour is urgently required.

4. The implication of trafficking for sexual exploitation includes two very important and pressing aspects. One is that it is a major public health issue, with undiagnosed mental and physical health needs due to stigma and prejudice. Another is the nature of children going missing – trafficking – which is an organised crime, which is intentional, where there is control and power over children always causing hurt, harm and damage. Therefore whatever support system is developed as a result of recommendations of this research will need to respond to (a) health needs of children and (b) trafficking as an organised crime occurring across borders.

It needs to be stated that this research cannot compare the lives of children who are kidnapped with that of children who are trafficked for sexual exploitation. The vulnerabilities and nature of exploitation of sex trafficking cannot be generalised to that of children who run away from homes, who elope to avoid marriage arranged by families, who are kidnapped, etc.

## LITERATURE REVIEW ON CHILD TRAFFICKING SYSTEM AND SURVIVORS OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

The purpose of literature review in this research was to understand the phenomenon on the basis of existing knowledge on child trafficking for sexual exploitation, the vulnerabilities, the impact and experiences of recovery and rehabilitation as these are our main concerns. This section has been arranged according to these key concepts.

## Cross border trafficking in children for sexual exploitation

Due to the scope of the phenomenon, a protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking has been developed by the United Nations (United Nations, 2000) and ratified in 2007 by 116 countries. By definition, as proposed in the protocol, *"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs'*. The protocol refers to children as *'any person under eighteen years of age'*. There is no consensus on a definition for child trafficking (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005) but in order to understand what child trafficking refers to, International Labour Office and UNICEF (International Labour Office & International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), 2009) proposes to consider those elements for the following definition: a child is considered trafficked if he/she has been moved within the country or have crossed border (s) by force or not for the purpose of exploitation. Child's vulnerability and abuse of this vulnerability is a strong indicator of trafficking. Moreover, it has to be noted that the trafficked person is not directly recognized as a victim and the lack of consensus on the status of the person substantially influences the recognition of the status of the survivor. Criminalizing trafficking for sexual exploitation would also participate in improving anti-trafficking measures and reducing trafficking and its impact on the civil society.

Therefore globally issue of trafficking is recognised as an organised crime. The indicators of trafficking lies as much in the process as in the outcome, the process of being coerced, transported and finally exploited. This implies that trafficking exists not only in the outcome, that is exploitation but in the means that leads to the outcome as well.

Trafficking in South Asia is widespread and pervasive with various causes and increasing complexity (Huda, 2006). Among them, high number of children, long and porous borders without proper control, migration and enlarged mobility due to urbanization but not only, lack of anti-trafficking legislation - despite some recent efforts and initiatives - that would better protect potential victims and survivors of cross-border trafficking (ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2006). In South Asia, the trafficking flow is transnational (Crawford, 2010) with Bangladesh (Asian Development Bank, 2002) and Nepal as major source countries and India as a destination country. Between 2010 and 2012, 97% of the trafficked victims in South Asia were found to be either from within the same sub-region or trafficked locally (UNODC, 2012). As a result of trafficking, children represent 40% and adults represent 60% among detected victims of trafficking in persons (UNODC, 2014). There is no information on gender profile of trafficked children. US Department of State (Park & Grace, 2002) estimates that 50 00 to 10 000 children and young women from Nepal and 15 000 children and women from Bangladesh are trafficked out their countries every year. Finally, trafficking for sexual exploitation represent 15% of all forms of exploitation in South Asia (UNODC, 2014).

The socio-political scenario in South-Asia is currently plagued by the effects of unsafe migration from rural, backward areas towards urbanised regions in search of better economic options. The lack of formal or monitored systems of migration forces people, even children, to take hasty migration opportunities. India is economically stronger than its neighbours and attracts migrants from Bangladesh and Nepal. Human smuggling from Bangladesh to India thrives on the barriers in economic migration, further complicated by frequent political unrest in Bangladesh. India has a flourishing sex trade, where supply is generated through trafficking and second generated prostitution and the demand is for adolescent girls. Poverty, gender based discrimination against girls (limited earning opportunities and prevalence of dowry) lead to families considering girls as liabilities. Families in poverty are easy prey to fake offers of employment as domestic labour or dowry-less marriage. The correlation between poverty and vulnerability to trafficking is not always direct, however dysfunctional family condition does accentuate the vulnerabilities of poverty, making adolescents from such dysfunctional families and rural set up a softer target for trafficking (N. Ray, 2008). Communities in source areas (rural South Asia) are unexposed to the consequences of trafficking in destination points; they see the direct benefits of migration – when migrants (even children and adolescents in domestic labour) send remittances to their families. Many women in prostitution, who had been trafficked, also try to earn their families' acceptance through money, which acts as a lure to many other families and adolescent in the community (George, 2010).

Thus the link between migration, poverty, political unrest, gender based discrimination and lack of stringent legislations against trafficking are well established in the available literature. What is not clear is the relation between these variables. Not all migration leads to trafficking, similarly not all poor people prefer marrying their daughters to strangers. Therefore though a general idea is present about the scenario the wealth of information that exists in the details of interaction between these variables is largely under-researched.

## Vulnerabilities

In order to understand causes of migration it is important to take into consideration the individual within the context. When the context is not favourable and the response system cannot protect individuals then it creates vulnerabilities. In its background paper, UN.GIFT (UNODC, 2008) suggests the following definition: 'vulnerability" refers to "a condition resulting from how individuals negatively experience the complex interaction of social, cultural, economic, political and environmental factors that create the context for their communities". Individual vulnerabilities are no longer based on individual characteristics: there are dynamic, systemic and therefore refer to collective responsibilities. Vulnerable individuals, families, communities are found in contexts where policies, cultural practices, and/or economical system do not protect its members and procure some alternatives through migration and to some extent through trafficking. Therefore vulnerabilities refer to collective responsibilities.

For some victims, sex trafficking happens to be an entry mechanism to sex work (Decker,

McCauley, Phuengsamran, Janyam, & Silverman, 2011). Economic opportunities, enslavement, self-stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001) may lead the victims to choose sex trade as a work even though after they have returned back home. Whatever their choice are, surviving exploitation questions the resiliency of survivors of cross- border trafficking. Empowerment, inner resources, high self-esteem have been identified in survivors of child sex trafficking although few studies reported serious and long lasting health and mental health outcomes (Oram, Stöckl, Busza, Howard, & Zimmerman, 2012).

## Impact of trafficking and sexual exploitation

First and foremost, survivors of sexual exploitation face multiples forms of violence: physical, psychological, sexual that affect their relationships, their perception of themselves and others, influence their decision making processes and orientate their life's choices. The exposure to cumulative types of violence place the survivors at risk of developing physical as well as psychological symptomatology ranging from severe to chronic pain. Most survivors will present post-traumatic symptoms, some levels of depression and anxiety. In a study on 204 trafficked girls (11,8%) and women (88,2%) in Europe (Hossain, Zimmerman, Abas, Light, & Watts, 2010), 55% and 48% presented respectively high levels of depression and anxiety, and 77% were at risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The intensity of the symptoms were linked to the duration in exploitation, confinement was linked with anxiety and sexual violence with PTSD. Another study in Nepal comparing mental health outcomes of sex workers versus non sex workers showed a higher intensity of symptoms among sex workers with a prevalence of 97,7% for anxiety, 80,8% for depression; 29,6% were at- risk for PTSD (Tsutsumi, Izutsu, Poudyal, Kato, & Marui, 2008). In order to understand the nature of trauma that survivors of sexual exploitation experience, and the distinctiveness of their experiences and trauma, it is important to delve into what is known about health impacts on survivors of other forms of sexual abuse, assault and violence as well.

Survivors of child sexual abuse become adults with needs for self-empowerment, a better self-esteem and self-reliance after they have been required to perform unwanted sexual act under someone else's control. Sexual abuse implies a position of power or authority from one person who takes advantage of a person's trust and respect to involve him/her in sexual activity. The long-term effects of child sexual abuse are diverse and relates to psychological as well as physical health (Bloom, 2003). Authors propose different categories to describe the symptomatology including various symptoms that can last, especially when they are ignored (Haileye, 2013). Those symptoms may be understood within the context in which they occur; child sexual abuse happening within family circle or during conflict or during sexual exploitation should be given specific attention in terms of diagnosis and during the therapeutic process. Besides the psychological consequences, the disclosure of the abuse (Weingarten & Cobb, 1995) and the meaning the survivors give to the abuse affects the development of the person. It is also known to determine the completion of the recovery process if it is engaged with in a therapeutic process (Baird, 1996).

During sexual exploitation, besides the violence committed by clients – who remains a stranger - women and girls are subject to interpersonal violence often perpetrated more specifically and repeatedly by one person: the brothel owner, the brothel manager, the pimp, etc. By some aspects, this kind of violence is similar to the one described through domestic violence, where the

intimate partner shapes the relationship based on power, control, harassment, humiliation, objectification, etc. In a systematic review, Langdon and her colleagues (Lagdon, Armour, & Stringer, 2014) found that intimate partner violence leads to high PTSD prevalence, high rates of depression and anxiety. In eastern India, among 1718 women interviewed, 16% reported physical violence, 52% experienced psychological abuse and 25% recounted sexual violence by their husband or other members of the family (Babu & Kar, 2009). Victims of interpersonal trauma tend to present more symptoms of PTSD than victims of non-interpersonal trauma (Alisic et al., 2014); they perceived their environment as unsafe and unpredictable (Forbes et al., 2014). The results from those studies are therefore relevant to understand the nature of violence endured by trafficked survivors.

During the journey from home to the brothel, victims may be raped as a mean of threat and coercion. Literature shows that survivors of sexual assault experience physical as well as psychological suffering with some specificities compared to other forms of violence. Evaluation of physical pain shows that women endure acute and severe pain during the aftermath of the sexual assault. It seems that the pain is not only located in specific body parts and this pain moves in the body with time (McLean et al., 2012); the authors recommend to explore the ethology of a neurobiological stress-related effect which could explain the long lasting effect of physical pain. Psychological distress is revealed through a myriad of symptoms related to PTSD, depression, anxiety, with relatively high levels of intensity and frequency which may vary with time. Shame and guilt may also be associated to PTSD and depression (Shin, Cho, Lee, & Chung, 2014), maintaining some affective disorders.

### From sexual exploitation, to sexual violence and trauma

If researches on health and mental health consequences of sexual exploitation are scarce, there are population of survivors of sexual violence who have been given more attention by humanitarian organisations and the international community: survivors of sexual violence happening in the middle and/or during the aftermath of a conflict – and even natural disasters. Those studies help us to understand and foresee the outcomes of sexual exploitation and some solution to alleviate the suffering caused by sexual violence and trauma. Depending on the context, sexual violence is used as a mean of terror, an individual threat to people's integrity notwithstanding that rape is a war crime prohibited by the international humanitarian law. Given that survivors of sexual violence requires specific attention due to the nature of the violence and the environment in which they live, advocacy remains decisive to address this issue by providing appropriate care and a legal framework which recognizes the victim of sexual violence and prosecute the perpetrators at local, national and international levels. For these reasons, immediate and  long lasting effects of sexual violence committed during and after conflicts continue to be documented by health workers even though estimations are imprecise and researches are limited (Palermo & Peterman, 2011). Among psychological disorders, survivors of rape shows high levels of depression, anxiety, PTSD, social phobia and sexual dysfunction. A study conducted on women survivors of rape during the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Loncar, Medved, Jovanović, & Hotujac, 2006) showed that psychological disorders were accentuated if the rape occurred with additional types of violence. Some symptoms may last if the environment is not conducive to resiliency and recovery. The

modalities of interventions in response to the physical pain and psychological distress endured by victims of rape and access to proper services have been improved thanks to humanitarian community (Shanks & Schull, 2000).

Considering the limited findings on mental health consequences of human trafficking but the growing numbers of people being trafficked, more studies are required to show the specificities and similarities between this population and other population also affected by sexual trauma-related. Studies show that PTSD, sexual dysfunction, depression and anxiety are common to all groups of survivors of sexual abuse, sexual assault and sexual violence. If left untreated, the symptoms turn chronic and will manifest through psychosomatic symptoms and other disorders which will may not directly identified or treated as issues related to the trauma. By understanding better the health response needs, it would probably participate in improving the coordination of the health sector towards survivors of sex-trafficking as well as to other trauma survivors. Indeed, the paucity of research on trauma of victims of sexual exploitation depends on a greater involvement of the health sector in responding with services. The humanitarian sector that responds to victims of sexual assault comprise of emergency and health sector, and therefore there is a greater capacity to recognise, detect, research and respond to issues of injury. Whereas, when it comes to the issue of trafficking for sexual exploitation, the nodal agencies are the criminal justice system and welfare. Social welfare and health services do not necessarily have the capacity nor the mandate to address trauma management as is known of its ineffectiveness with several groups such as war veterans or child victims of domestic violence.

The perception of sexual violence in the public sphere has evolved with time (Bourke, 2012). From being essentially perceived as an external event with physical injury and pain, it is now recognised as an event with psychological consequences. Until the recent years, it has been assumed that victims of sexual violence would suffer from post-traumatic disorders with a plethora of symptoms – and would fall under the category of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – due to the exposure to any acts of violence. However, studies tend to show that immediate and long-lasting psychological effects of violence depend on the nature of violence, the type of violence (Salazar, Keller, Gowen, & Courtney, 2013) and personal history of psychiatric disorders. This recognition, of what these long term impacts are, and therefore what healing or recovery should mean for survivors of sexual violence, is an evolving subject of research.

Very few researches have been conducted on health impacts on survivors of human trafficking, servitude, bonded labour, sexual exploitation, and the systemic response and recovery services are largely uninformed of recovery needs for survivors of trafficking. This literature review reveals the need for more studies in order to understand the consequences of multiple violence exposure on children and women, across cultures, amongst different age groups, and other variables, to determine nature of recovery services required in the public health and social welfare system.

## Rescue, recovery and rehabilitation

Rescue is the key moment of the post-exploitation period. With or without help (i.e. help from a customer, raid by police, etc.), on her own will or against it (Davidson, 2010), the trafficked person is extracted from the exploitation conditions. After rescue, the UN protocol (United Nations, 2000) foresees that: '*Each State Party shall consider implementing measures to provide for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims of trafficking in persons, including, in appropriate cases, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, other relevant organizations and other elements of civil society, and, in particular, the provision of: (a) Appropriate housing; (b) Counselling and information, in particular as regards their legal rights, in a language that the victims of trafficking in persons can understand; (c) Medical, psychological and material assistance; and (d) Employment, educational and training opportunities'.* That is the first step that will facilitate the future survivor's rehabilitation through protection and care, thus enhancing physical and psychological well-being.

Among other services, response to trafficking in persons requires a health system response which should be strengthened. Lack of coordination and the weakness of response to mental health problems slow down the recovery process (Macias Konstantopoulos et al., 2013) (Deshpande & Nour, 2013). Besides it has to be noted that rehabilitation services often promote the recovery process based on building back on individual resources and support resiliency, which is rather limited to the individual and do not take the family into consideration.

While trafficking is a trans-national crime, law enforcement in the region is not well connected between countries – leading to lack of joint and coordinated investigation, lack of quick and prompt rescue of trafficked victims and lack of identification and prosecution of traffickers in source areas. It also means that traffickers in Nepal and Bangladesh, who smuggle and traffic victims to India, do not get apprehended. Law enforcement in India is a state subject (and not federal) and hence regulations and formalities change from one state to another, which is in most cases, as the source areas and destination areas often fall in different states. As a consequence, participation of survivors with prosecution agencies is lower than expected. The legal system fails to protect the child from leaving and fails to provide justice upon his return home. Again it is one system depending on other systems and the legal framework cannot solve the whole issue of survivor's rehabilitation but it contributes to its recovery process.

Based on the literature review, this empirical research was designed in a way that collect of data would be suitable enough for analysing current situations of child trafficking in South Asia. The study design is based on key research questions (see below) that were elaborated by researchers and reviewed by the participants prior to the start of the research. The objectives of the research were developed in accordance to Plan International's purposes and based on gaps in knowledge identified in the different phases of trafficking - before, during and after exploitation. The methodology was developed considering the participant's attitude and the context. The analysis of qualitative and quantitative results intend to shed light on the mechanisms that underlie the migration process and allow or prevent the prosecution of the criminals. As the information gathered could be similar to other population of missing children as shown in literature search, some generalizations are likely. Due to the paucity of information, we allow some extrapolation in

interpreting results.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Therefore the present research inquired into the lives of women who were trafficked as children for sexual exploitation to seek answers to the following questions:

(A) **Vulnerability:** What is the nature of vulnerability (social, structural, emotional and cognitive) and aspirations that may have resulted in choices and decisions by victims and their families, and entrapment of victims by their traffickers? What were the supportive factors and resources (self, family, and community, institutional or systemic) that victims may have offered defence to being trafficked?

(B) **Transportation:** What are the subjective experiences of the victims in their journey from their homes to the destination points, until they were sold off to 'buyers'? What are their experiences and observations, checks or barriers, resistances or facilitating factors/ agencies, in their travel? How did their relationship with traffickers evolve in the course of this journey as compared to the pre-trafficking stage?

(C) **Servitude, bondage and exploitation:** What were the experiences of victims of being subjected to slavery, servitude and/or bondage – what were the methods of control, intimidation, force, deception or fraud that were experienced by victims? How does it impact victims, their thought- feeling-action structure – their worldview and choices and decisions, interface with systems and relationships? What coping strategies or resilience may have they found thereafter?

(D) **Recovery services and rehabilitation:** What recovery services do victims find useful for themselves and what factors may impede recovery? How do victims experience systems (policy, legal, bureaucratic or private service providers) which aim to assist them in their journey to recovery and rehabilitation? How do they experience their agency and control in post-trafficked, post-exit situations? What are the stressors and inhibitors that victims experience in the course of, or post return to their families and communities?

# <u>OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH</u>

## To identify points of intervention to support girls whose vulnerabilities place them at a higher risk of being trafficked

Vulnerability factors that lead to trafficking are numerous, they vary from one individual to another, one community to another and change with time. The dichotomy between internal versus external vulnerability factors is not applicable to trafficking: domestic violence, sexual abuse, neglect, poverty are external factors while trauma, style of attachment, emotional aspects and cognitive process are internal factors. They are interrelated.

As observed in UN.GIFT background paper on human trafficking (UNODC, 2008) individual vulnerabilities are dynamic, systemic and therefore collective responsibilities. Thus, none of the factors act as a vulnerability singularly, rather there exists a constellation of several factors that have a higher probability of predicting a child's trafficking. Plan's focus is on preventing trafficking by identifying channels through which the girl can seek help when a situation arises that puts her at a risk of being trafficked. Alternatively Plan would also like to reach assistance and intervention to the child at risk of being trafficking, if one could identify this constellation of vulnerabilities of such a child. The question lays in the interaction between both factors and the identification of factors that mitigate or accentuate vulnerability in potential trafficked victims. The objective is to identify a pattern of factors that seem to accentuate vulnerability and identify factors that seem to create a layer of protection to reduce risk of being trafficked. The implication of such a finding would be towards better understanding of difficulties in disclosure that prevents a trafficked child from seeking help.

## To prevent child trafficking by identifying risk inducing processes within families dealing with their vulnerabilities

Poverty, family dysfunction, dream for a better future, misconception about migration reinforce the need for life changes. While considering this parameter, it is necessary to examine the active and passive role of the family (Gozdziak & BUMP, 2008), the capacities of the primary system to protect or expose its members to risks taking to ensure the survival of the family. In that context, the objective is to identify the process that leads to a child being trafficked, to isolate the triggers.

Understandably, as vulnerabilities increase risk accumulates: leaving home, migrating, crossing borders are as many situations that increase risks factors for smuggling, arrest, disappearance, etc. Those risks are relatively underestimated and the individual leaves home despite uncertainty. Often there is a tacit blame placed on the family when a child goes missing. This study aims to identify the process through which families decide on a child's migration to understand the struggles, dilemmas that might be present within the family prior to a child's leaving home. The assumption is that such dilemmas can be identified in the decision making process preceding a child's migration and protective factors can be identified along with factors that accentuates the child's risk of being

trafficked. In order to prevent trafficking by encouraging families to seek help during this period of struggle and in the course of leaving it is important to understand such decision making processes and family dynamics prior to trafficking.

### To develop knowledge that can sensitise vulnerable girls and girls in transit to be aware of risk of being trafficked, in order to enable them to seek help while being transported

Cross-border trafficking involves widespread movement from a village to a border and then to another country and a city in the destination country. Commonly most trafficked victims don't remember the preliminary part of their journey, on account of being drugged. Few though recount noticing a marked change in the trafficker's behaviour towards them once a border is crossed. This research aims to explore the process of transport and transit to identify signs that inform a child that she is being trafficked so that she can seek help. The questions will be aimed at getting as much detail based on the respondent's memory of the entire journey involving the trafficked and the trafficker. An insight into this process of transportation can be used as part of a prevention system and support system meant to check the incidence of trafficking while a child is in transit.

### To understand the nature of exploitation in order to identify protective factors within an exploitative system and indicators that can help shape rehabilitation post rescue

Plan's objective of understanding the impact of trafficking required an in-depth study of the exploitative conditions impinging on the victim. This is in order to appreciate the individual differences in the way every person perceives and makes sense of their exploitation and the variation that exists in each exploitative situation. To consider all exploitations and all systems of exploitation as same would not help in preparing a sensitive rehabilitation mechanism that is survivor centric and trauma informed. Therefore this research aimed to understand the nature of servitude, captivity and exploitation on one hand and possible autonomy, agency and compensation on the other hand that may be present in each of the respondent's experiences of exploitation.

To be open to protective factors within an exploitative system does not diminish the seriousness of the crime, rather it is expected to help the researcher and Plan in taking a comprehensive perspective of the situation. It is a widely held notion that victims are brain-washed while in captivity and the impact of their exploitative experience is so entrenched in their psyche that they end up directly or indirectly protecting the traffickers from criminal prosecution, which apparently is a counter-intuitive phenomenon. In order to unravel the questions surrounding the willingness of a survivor to participate in the justice process the research approaches the survivor's experiences with law enforcement during exploitation, the meaning of relationships formed with exploiters and the survivor's own sense of being exploited within the wider context of pre-trafficking family relationships and communication. The implication of studying the survivor's experience of exploitation, being aware of the differences that exist in different situations, and looking at it from an ecological perspective that places the survivor within her ecosystem will inform rehabilitation planning, especially for post rescue counselling.

In order to ensure that secondary victimisation does not occur after rescue and during rehabilitation it is therefore necessary to be aware of what the survivor constructs as exploitation and who according to the survivor is an exploiter and in which context. Inability to allow the meaning of exploitation to emerge, though time consuming, from the survivor's narrative is same as suppressing 'reality' as perceived by the person for whom the rehabilitation programme is being prepared. This is therefore an important and crucial objective from the point of view of preparing relevant and appropriate rehabilitation mechanisms.

## To understand a survivor's construction of 'normal life' post -rescue

Life post-rescue is challenging no matter the level of support and care survivors receive and accept. They have to live with their trafficking experience. Through NGOs services, they are offered to prosecute traffickers, which mean they have to disclose their experience of trafficking at some point. But, guilt prevents disclosure, mistrust prevents disclosure, and trauma prevents disclosure. Depending on the multiple factors such as level of psychological distress, self-esteem, family/social support disclosure will or will not happen. It may or may not favour the justice process. Knowing the psychological impact of trafficking, how could we relate the psychic conditions of the survivor to her willingness to prosecute traffickers? Additionally, when the survivor is offered to decide to prosecute traffickers, she is usually in an 'in-between' situation, the process of rescue and returning home. This process requires adaptation and changes, and provokes stress, anxiety, anger, self-stigma, etc. The psychosocial impact is significant and we aim at identifying the strengths and the weaknesses in the rehabilitation system that prevent or facilitate the empowerment of the survivor.

Reconciliation between past and present is ideally recommended for trauma survivors, but this takes time and it is sometimes impossible when there are unresolved mental health issues. Nonetheless, recognition of mental health needs and time for recovery show that repatriation is not the end of the impact of trafficking. For survivors to go back to normal life – meaning previous life - may not be a choice and may have also become impossible. Keeping these complexities in mind the study aims to understand the meaning of a 'normal life after trafficking' from a survivor's frame of reference, their own constructions of what it means to be them after they are rescued.

Trafficking often brings disruptions and positive and/or negative changes in survivors' life. It is therefore crucial to understand how survivors integrate those changes in their new life and the processes that need to be positively or negatively reinforced on the way to recovery and social reintegration. This will serve the purpose of bringing a closure to the cycle of trafficking, it will essentially sensitize the academic community to the lived realities of a survivor, who by the virtue of having been trafficked is at a state of heightened vulnerabilities both social and psychological. Understanding the post rescue dilemmas, reconciliations, growth, resilience, dysfunction, etc. will be important for designing long term rehabilitation programmes that aim to positively impact a survivor's life post reintegration and integration.

# METHODOLOGY

## 1. RESEARCH METHOD

### ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTION

The present study is formed on the basic assumption that reality is constructed and not discovered. This is a qualitative study of women who were trafficked as children to understand the entire spectrum of their experiences from vulnerabilities, to transit, to exploitation and finally return and rehabilitation. One of the most recurring difficulty faced by social workers and law enforcement officials, while working with trafficked persons is the inconsistencies in their verbal reports. Often dates, narratives, characters and their attributions change over time when a trafficked person recounts her experiences, making the 'discovery' of reality by a social worker and law enforcement official very fragile and unreliable. This study aims to build on this inconsistency by adopting an ontological position that accepts realities as constructions and not something external that can be interpreted.

The present study is empirical as it is based on direct observation and interaction with survivors and it blends a qualitative approach within a psychological research framework which also achieves a certain degree of participation by various stakeholders. It is conscious of not treating the respondent as a passive repository of information, rather the stance is constructionist wherein the researcher and respondents construct data within the boundaries of the objectives.

### A PSYCHOSOCIAL FRAMEWORK

Studying child trafficking is a challenge due to lack of reliable quantitative data (Masud Ali, 2005), limited understanding of victims of trafficking ordeals, restricted access to traffickers, variability of information on service providers and their adequacy to victims' needs. Researches have led either to qualitative or quantitative data depending on the difficulties in accessing survivors, time constraints, and the need for generalization. Besides, empirical studies are limited but qualitative methodology is often preferred as those studies are conducted in the field of social sciences. Therefore, we favoured a qualitative research with a psychosocial framework as we consider the uniqueness of each case where eventually child trafficking could be described as an individual experience before being considered as a collective one. In order to remain innovative we also selected tools and techniques that could be further used by service providers.

Due to the complexity of the circumstances in which children are trafficked, the diversity of situations they are exposed to and their individual capacities to recover from their experiences, we choose a comprehensive and integrated approach that considers the individual in the course of her life.

A qualitative psychosocial research has been selected, as the framework it offers is the most suitable for the nature of the research as well as for the profile of the participants. In comparison to a purely psychological approach/ perspective, which looks at a phenomena arising from or influencing/ intended to influence the mind or emotions within the individual, a psychosocial approach positions the individual in networks of interpersonal relationships, organisations, and socio/political/economic systems, thus looking at the interrelation between social factors and individual thought and behaviour. Thus, a psychosocial approach addresses the well-being of individuals in relation to their environments. It involves understanding a survivor's internal psychological processes (as a result of hereditary and environment, as well as how these processes interact with one's current social and physical conditions (relationships, support system, employment, living situation, health).

This approach also builds on the value of the survivor's own right to self-determination, that is, the right to make one's own decisions. The psychosocial research approach aims to explore the nature of obstacles/ challenges and strategies of dealing with them so that they do not get in the way of self-fulfilling.

As it will be emphasized all along the research process, one of the strengths of this project lies in its multicultural approach covering three cultures, three countries, and therefore three perspectives on cross border trafficking. Because child trafficking knows no border and no boundary, it was essential to address this topic taking into consideration its multifaceted nature.

## A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

This research is participatory at two levels: the researchers choose the tools they use, the survivors are invited to give recommendations on the tools prior to the start of the research. This was done in order to test the feasibility of the methodology, which was very specific to the present sample and was innovative and hence had no prior justifications. As this research ultimately intends to improve anti-trafficking systems, it was considered that survivors of trafficking would be the best persons to consult on a methodology regarding trafficking systems they were exposed to. In that context, a participatory research allows a better empowerment of the participants and a higher level of appropriateness of the results (World Bank, 2006) by the stakeholders. At the same time it provides critical insights into participant's perspectives. With this approach, we ensured that the research strategy was appropriate, sound and ethical and the data collection is valuable.

Additionally, partnerships were established with four NGOs – two in India, one in Nepal and one in Bangladesh – in order to access to participants and to involve those stakeholders in a research process they will benefit from. Therefore stakeholders were also invited to give their feedback on the research and its methodology prior and during the time the research was conducted.

Thus, the selection of tools and a set of questions from the semi-structured interviews were discussed during the induction meeting with the participants. It was ensured that all researchers are familiar with this conceptual framework and the participatory process. The nature of the participatory research, the main objectives, and the model of action research, its advantages and limitations were discussed. A mid-term and a final evaluation provided information on the validity of

the research.

The participatory process was developed in 3 phases that corresponds to 3 different meetings:

The **first phase** comprised an induction session where the participants, the researchers and the NGOs' representatives met. The objective of the sessions was i) To give the opportunity to meet with the researchers; ii) To define the general objective of the methodology; iii) To validate the methodology and its feasibility.

The induction meeting held in Kolkata in July 2013 gathered researchers, NGO leaders and focal points for the research, as well as survivors as part of the participatory approach to this qualitative research. A presentation of 'Engaging survivors with Participatory Research' was conducted and discussed. In order for NGOs' representative to be fully committed, it was important to explain how the whole process works and to answers some preparatory questions such as: what is their level of commitment? How does it work? Why are participants invited for the preparation of the research? Etc. They found it interesting and innovative. In two groups, participants, researchers and NGOs representatives discussed the relevance of the questions presented related to pre-, during, and post-trafficking periods. Again, they did not see any difficulties in answering the questions; they only mention that some of the questions were too intimate and too private and may not be answered even though they are relevant. That was respected and participants were ensured that they are not obliged to answers if they do not feel like. Some of the tools were presented to the participants who found them interesting, easy-to-use. They did not foresee any difficulties to answer those questions.

The **second phase** started with the first interview sessions in August 2013. The process was assessed during a second meeting held in Kolkata in November 2013.This was our first meeting since the induction meeting. The supervision has already started through skype. At this stage, after 3 sessions, each researcher has already developed his/her own relationship with the participants. They have already found their place as a researcher and the process of appropriateness of the research has started. The heterogeneity pertaining to their own interest, their skills, their personal commitment to the research has given to the research a mosaic of approaches that will be further explored.

During that phase, the mid-term consultation meeting took place. Following the first meeting, the objective of this second meeting was to gather again the researchers, NGOs leaders and focal points for the research, as well as survivors as part of the participatory approach to this qualitative research. This meeting gave the opportunity: i) to the researchers to analyse the different sessions altogether; ii) to collect participants' feedback on the methodology and the thematic; iii) to the participants to meet and discuss together their respective points of view regarding trafficking; iv) to the participants to meet with NGO representatives (especially for the ones from Bangladesh). This meeting brought new information as well as new viewpoint that were taken into consideration in the research process. The researchers were invited to present each case study so that we could discuss it altogether. In the presentation, were included the 3 sessions and some other information gathered beside the content of the interview (by NGO staff, before or after the interview, etc.). Some relevant thematic were also discussed on individual basis.

The **third phase** consisted in the last meeting prior to the end of the research period in order to: i) get participant's feedback from the research; ii) get feedback from NGO representatives; iii) share and discuss the preliminary results with researchers, participants and NGO representatives; iv) organize the last review meeting with researchers; v) get the researchers' feedback on methodology.

By considering this methodology, we also have to consider that this kind of process, for various reasons, is rarely used with a qualitative research. Firstly, it is due to the nature of the research (i.e., the constraints related to access to children trafficking) and secondly because this issue is much more individualistic than collective- participatory research are usually used for researches with communities. Nonetheless, this methodology happened to be relevant in the context of this research where there are several methodological constraints pertaining to the number of researchers, with participants interviewed in 3 different countries, a limited number of meetings with the survivors, and project duration equal to 6 months. The participatory process allowed guaranteeing the quality of data collection in an appropriate framework.

## Innovative mix of methods

The qualitative psychological design adopted for this study relies on obtaining data that is not in the form of responses to a structured and standardized set of questions, rather it is exploratory and interpretive. Therefore epistemologically the study accepts subjective and interpretive data, instead of seeking objective representation of a certain phenomenon. In cognisance of Plan International's sample size restriction of 12 and the basic methodological assumptions explained so far the research focused on obtaining in-depth and comprehensive data from each of the respondents, thereby aiming for a range of responses and information rather than number of responses. Moreover the study is based on survivors at various junctures of the trafficking experience, that is, in the trafficked condition, in a shelter home post rescue, reunited with family after rescue and living in the community but not in the village/natal home to cover the entire spectrum of experiences.

Social research methodologies that rely on questionnaires have reported difficulties in gathering in depth data on survivors' experiences. This study was therefore designed to counteract such limitations, the prime being lack of trust between researcher and respondent. Such lack of trust could be a result of betrayals that survivors have experienced at multiple levels – in their families, by people they may have trusted and the experience of torture, violence and servitude. This may make it very difficult for them to trust any service provider – caregivers, social workers, police and in particular, researchers whose questions may provoke anxiety and fear triggering secondary trauma. Survivors find it difficult to recount memories of traumatic events. Social researchers have often reported unreliability of data that they may have collected, inconsistencies therein. And therefore a purely survey based social research may not be able to create a therapeutic relationship with survivors that could create sufficient safety for them to delve into the unsafe within her mind - her memories.

The other problem is that of bias in response as well as in questions. Response bias comes up when a respondent wants to please the researcher or present a certain picture and therefore answers in a particular way. Therefore this study consciously avoided asking close ended or leading questions. The design focuses on allowing respondents to narrate their life experiences with respect to the objectives of the research and is not concerned with verification of such narratives.

The other problem is that of researcher's bias that may develop in such an in-depth psychosocial study where researchers were to spend a considerable time interviewing the survivors. Therefore the design included a periodic supervision session in which the researchers shared experiences with the principal investigator to identify such projections and biases that may get triggered while working on such sensitive topics. It was also mandatory for the field researchers to maintain a journal recording their own thoughts, feelings and inhibitions generated during the interviews. This became the matter for supervision, reflection and review. There was a continuous reflection of the self to maintain a boundary that restricted the researcher from slipping into the role of an interventionist.

Therefore the present methodology relied on iterative in-depth interviews through which a combination of qualitative data using participatory tools and semi-structured interviews as well as quantitative data with psychological tests was collected. The combination of semi-structured interviews, projective tests and psychological scales were used as it appeared to be more suitable for people with low literacy level and not necessarily used to long interviews. The interviews were semi-structured in order to allow for data to emerge from the respondent's narrative.

Last but not least, the methodology of the research is practical enough to be used by NGO workers in the frame of their daily work.

### 1.  SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANTS

The sample or participants of the study were selected purposively to meet the objectives and methodological justifications. In South Asia region, India has become one of the main destination for transnational sexual exploitation of children and women from Nepal and Bangladesh (Joffres et al., 2008). Therefore the sample for this study was selected through NGOs supporting survivors from India, Nepal and Bangladesh to capture the most comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of children trafficked for sexual exploitation, which as explained in the earlier sections is a very crucial sub-set of the Missing Child universe. Within India the data were collected from survivors residing in Maharashtra and West Bengal as the largest volume of children known to be trafficked from Bangladesh and Nepal is to Maharashtra and West Bengal. Similarly Kathmandu in Nepal and Jessore in Bangladesh were known hubs or catchment areas of trafficked children and for that reason of survivors as well.

The inclusion criteria used to select the sample were:

1. Females who were trafficked as a child, who was less than 18 years old;
2. Must be 18 years while participating in the research as per the design;
3. Must have been trafficked to India to fulfil the cross border trafficking criterion;
4. Must be either in trafficked destination, but not in bondage, slavery or servitude any longer or must be in a shelter home after rescue or must be repatriated and reunited with her family or must be repatriated and living independently in the community but not in village/natal home.

As the gestation time period between rescue and participation in the research depended on the NGO's work, it was defined according to the population hosted by the respective NGOs: i) for Shakti Samuha and Right Jessore, the participant had been repatriated after 1 year, and rescued 3 years ago; ii) for Rescue Foundation, the participant had been rescued since 3 months; iii) for Shakti Samuha, the participant had been repatriated in 2009-2010 to Kathmandu, gone home and came back for studies; iv) for Hamari Muskan, the participant was trafficked from Bangladesh, was between 35-50 years old, and was not in bonded labour.

Total 14 participants were selected and the research was completed with 13 as one of the participant ended her participation after the 2nd session of interview. The mean age was 24 years old (SD=7, 8). Among the 13 participants, 4 participants had been rescued and were currently in a shelter home in Mumbai, awaiting repatriation, we shall call them – Amal, Sairah, Siyana and Smriti; 4 women from Dhaka or Jessore had been repatriated after exploitation and had returned home, we shall call them – Pori, Mou, Ranu and Dipti, among them 3 live with their family and one lived independently; 3 participants from Nepal had returned to Kathmandu, but did not stay in the village/natal home, we shall call them – Upasana, Reshma and Sapana. Finally, 2 women from Murshidabad, who did not exit the trafficked destination, but were not in bondage, slavery or servitude any longer would be called – Jamila and Rahini.

### *Selection process through NGOs*

An empirical study of trafficked survivors is very difficult because of the problem of accessing trafficked survivors, especially those living in the community. Therefore it was decided to access survivors through NGOs, not just because it was convenient but also because it provided a trustworthy introducer for the researchers expecting to obtain in-depth information from a trafficked survivor. Partnerships were established with four NGOs – two in India, one in Nepal and one in Bangladesh who consented to cooperate and participate in this research and offer access to survivors. Accessing survivors through NGOs ensured that any need for intervention could be immediately reported by the researchers who were restricted from performing any therapeutic activity while collecting data. The issue of dissemination of research results and benefit from the research findings could also be better managed, in our opinion if one went through NGOs who were already working with the survivors. NGOs were selected on the basis of:

1. NGOs who deal with Bangladeshi and Nepali survivors

2. NGOs who focused on integration into communities and not just family reunification
3. NGOs who work on repatriation and reunification with families
4. NGOs who could help access survivors who are in trafficked situation (brothels in this case)
5. NGOs who had their own shelter homes

The partners of Change Mantras, and the researchers have had a long relationship with NGOs who provide health and rehabilitation services to survivors of trafficking. Among those NGOs, we proposed a collaboration with Rescue Foundation located in Maharashtra (India), Rights Jessore in Jessore (Bangladesh), Shakti Samuha in Kathmandu (Nepal), and Hamari Muskan in Kolkata (India). They have all consented to cooperate and participate in this research and to offer the researchers access to survivors.

**Rights Jessore** is *one of the leading organisations in Bangladesh working against trafficking in children, adolescents and women. It is a member of the anti-trafficking Task Force formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Bangladesh – which is a forum for government and civil society organisations to raise issues of anti-trafficking policy and law enforcement and implementation. Rights Jessore has facilitated rescue of trafficked children, repatriation of children trafficked across borders to India, follow up of survivors reunited with their families and their reintegration and legal case management of victims for prosecution of traffickers as well as campaigned in 8 districts of Bangladesh on these issues to raise awareness in communities and governance agencies.* For this research, Rights Jessore selected potential participants and facilitated the meetings between participants and researchers in the premises of the NGO. They also supported the process of passport delivery and took responsibilities towards the participants' families, to ensure their participation to the meetings.

**Rescue Foundation** *is an Indian non-profit, government recognized and registered NGO working for rescue, rehabilitation and repatriation of victims for human trafficking from different parts of India, Nepal & Bangladesh and sold for forced prostitution.* For this research, Rescue Foundation selected the participants. They appointed two persons for the coordination of the research and facilitated the meetings between participants and researchers in the premises of the NGO. They also supported the process of passport delivery and took responsibilities to ensure the coming of participants to the meetings.

**Shakti Samuha** *is the first organization in Nepal to be established and run by survivors of trafficking. Since 1996 the organization has been organizing and empowering returning trafficking survivors by providing shelter, legal aid, vocational training and counselling.* For this research, Shakti Samuha selected the participants and they supported the process of passport delivery and ensured the coming of participants to the meetings.

**Hamari Muskan,** based in Kolkata is a *'group of like-minded women who have been working in the development sector in India for more than a decade now. Directly or indirectly they have been either working in the area of trafficking or violence against women and adolescent groups'.* For this research, Hamari Muskan facilitated the search for potential participants living in Bowbazar. The representative participated in all meetings.

Apart from offering access to survivors NGOs performed the following roles:

1. Organize meetings between researchers and survivors
2. Assign focal point for the follow up of the meeting schedule and dealing with any issues coming from the researcher or the participant
3. Provide space for interview if necessary
4. Make recommendations on the research protocol

The research was conducted in 3 different countries. A team of 5 researchers living in India, Nepal and Bangladesh performed the fieldwork. The criteria of selecting the researchers was:

1. Mental health professionals who have worked on trauma and victims not restricted to trafficking
2. Contextually familiar with South Asia, trafficking and its conditions
3. Residing in the country of data collection and speaking the language spoken by the participants.

### *Profile and role of researchers*

Among the 5 field researchers, 4 were psychologists and one was a process worker/therapist. The research was led by a principal investigator who was a clinical psychologist and a social researcher.

1. Uma Chatterjee (India) is a clinical psychologist by training and has developed expertise in psychosocial research and programming for victims of child abuse and sexual exploitation.
2. Sarbari Gomes (India) is a therapist and process worker by training and an organizational consultant, engaged in individual therapy and professional coaching.
3. Kamal Ahmed (Bangladesh) is a psychologist, an academic and an associate professor at the Dhaka University, a Department of Clinical Psychology, a researcher and a trainer on psychosocial programmes.
4. Nafisa Siddique (Bangladesh) is a clinical psychologist; she has worked with sex workers who are mothers of children living in red light areas in Bangladesh.
5. Anuradha Acharya (Nepal) is a counsellor working with Shakti Samuha.

In order to represent best the interest of the participants, the researchers are from the same nationality and speak the language of the participants. The researchers have got different experiences regarding the thematic of the research: while some have already worked with survivors of sex trafficking, others have never directly worked with this population. Differences and diversity in experiences, backgrounds, opinions and approaches is therefore an added value to this research.

Considering the frame of this research, the role of the researchers was to ensure that a trustful relationship could be established and interviews would be conducted. Indeed, building trust between researcher and respondent is a challenge as survivors have experienced betrayals at multiple levels – in their families, by

people they may have trusted, the experience of torture, violence and servitude, makes it very difficult for them to trust any service providers whose questions may provoke anxiety and fear. Providing an ethic and sound interview in a safe setting was considered a priority and this was respected all along the research process by all researchers.

## 3. DATA COLLECTION

### A. Procedure

This was a psychosocial study of trafficked survivors, who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation as children and was designed to be qualitative as well as participatory. The collection of data started right after the induction meeting. The data were collected by each researcher in their own language, in Nepali for participants in Nepal and in Bengali for participants from Bangladesh. The actual data collection was conducted over a period of six months, however the entire procedure was much more elaborate and detailed as described next.

The procedure consisted of monthly meetings where the researcher and the participants met and worked on different themes and explored different areas of the survivor's life. These were meetings lasted for two and half hours on an average and six such meetings (sessions) were conducted with each participant.

The participants were interviewed in the shelter home (due to the Indian law, they are not allowed to leave the shelter home while their case is ongoing), in the premises of the NGO partner or in a place where they feel safe. Therefore, some participants were met in their home or in a place of their choice. All participants were met alone without any other person participating in the interview. They were informed enough time in advance so that they would be prepared for the interview. They were interviewed between August 2013 and May 2014. Most of the sessions were conducted in 2013; the remaining 5 and 6 sessions were conducted between January and May 2014. For various reasons, the monthly sessions as previously foreseen could not happen: political events in Bangladesh prevented some visits to Jessore, changes in researchers' schedule, etc. The frequency of the meeting is an important aspect to take into consideration in the process of building the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The adverse situations they have been through and their actual life necessitates that the researcher and the participant are provided with sufficient time to establish a safe and confident relationship. It is also considered as a need for the participant to process the information, emotions, thoughts that occurred during the meeting. They were offered to contact the researcher by phone between 2 meetings if they wished.

During each meeting, the instruction of the session is given at the beginning and we carefully considered the settings as well as the well as the way the interview was conducted. Pictorial tools are given at the beginning of the interview in order to open the floor to discussion. Then a semi-directive interview allows the interviewer to ask a set of questions as per guideline; it also gives the

opportunity to explore other topics following the participant's narrative. Questionnaires are conducted at the end of the session. With the consent of the participant the researcher recorded the interview with the participant (with a recorder if possible, by writing if it is not possible). He/she translated in writing the content of the interview in English. Besides, he/she took notes on the process and the outcome of the exercise. Any observation based on his/her own feelings and ideas was also recorded.

The process of the research follows 6 steps/sequences where the individual's chronology from her childhood to her present life. Each of these steps corresponds to one objective defined from the overall objective and based on a specific thematic. Each theme is covered using one exercise, one or more questionnaires and one semi-structured interview (see Annex 2: *Guideline on methodology for research on survivors of cross-border trafficking*). According to the topics that the participant was comfortable with the researcher proposed a semi-directive interview which duration was comprised between one to two hours maximum.

**The six sessions covered the following themes and areas of exploration:**

*Session 1:* "The cycle of life" allows exploration of life course transitions - change in roles and statuses that represents a distinct departure from prior roles and statuses – will allow identification of patterns of stability and change, which usually involves multiple transitions; also significant occurrences involving a relatively abrupt change that may produce serious and long-lasting effects may be highly determinant in the construction of selves, identities, subjectivities and experience. Finally, turning point such as life events that produce a lasting shift in the life course trajectory is investigated.

*Session 2:* Psychosocial support structure: "The ecological model of human development" (Bronfenbrenner, 1993) includes 5 systems: Each system depends on the contextual nature of the person's life and offers a diversity of options and sources of growth. Furthermore, within and between each system are bi-directional influences. These bi-directional influences imply that relationships have impact in two directions, both away from the individual and towards the individual. It will give the opportunity to the participants to identify main figures of social support in her own environment (past, present and future).

*Session 3:* "The management of altered body image". In relation to physical as well as emotional experience, the body memory has an impact on the shaping of self-image and self-esteem. In case of sexual violence, this impact is rather negative with long lasting effect. Exploring altered relationship to one's own body (now perceived as contaminated and devalued, feelings of rejection towards one's body) that will allow the identification of psychological (emotional and cognitive) issues at individual level.

*Session 4:* Living free from the impact of violence and exploitation. The 4th session explores relation to power and control, the capacity to recognize and analyse their life experience, the relationships that were established between the perpetrators and the participants and the supporters/helpers. The ability, capacity, and willingness to keep 'me' safe (before, then and now). In many cases, survivors do not wish to pursue police/legal action due to safety and insecurity risks or other reasons. Assessing the degree to which participants consider being protected

when they are in contact with judges, lawyers, and police, is therefore essential to better understand their strategy of protection.

**Session 5:** Bonds and belongings". The 5th session focuses on acquiring a better sense of safety and security. It is essential to assess the perception of protective and risks factors that contribute to and influence the type and extent of violence in the setting that may lead to traffic. Exploring experiences of marginalization, discrimination and distress- personal accounts of living within a marginalized social group/community, during exploitation period. Exploring experiences of stigmatization, distress, during rehabilitation period.

**Session 6:** The quality of life. Finally the 6th session refers to their actual life and explores "The quality of life": their capacity to give a sense to their life experience is explored as it informs on their process of resilience, their level of empowerment and their ability to make their own decision. With regards to the main objective of the research, the researcher seeks their understanding of trafficking, abuse and violence.

## B. Tools for Data collection

In order to collect primary data, a mix of quantitative and qualitative tools were used to collect data to make the findings more robust and achieve a degree of triangulation of data to aid in interpretation: semi- structured interview, pictorial method, and psychological tests. All tools and exercises have been presented and selected by all the researchers. The description of all the tools follows.

### a. Semi-structured interviews

A guideline for the semi-structured interview has been created for each session in order to collect some qualitative data about the person, her experiences, her thoughts and emotions, etc. This way some kind of homogeneity between the 5 researchers' interviews was ensured. The set of questions guides the researcher and the participants throughout the interview. The questions were selected in accordance to the research's objectives and the session's objectives. Nonetheless, due to dissimilarities regarding the context in which the respondents live, questions were adapted to explore thoughts-feelings-experiences around rescue or return to their families or communities, or what services or experiences they may have found healing, empowering or helped in coping or building their resilience.

### b. Questionnaires

Some quantitative data were also collected with questionnaires assessing mental health status. In 2012 one systematic review highlights the evidence of a link between sexual exploitation resulting from trafficking and violence leading to the deterioration of the survivors' health and mental health status (Oram et al., 2012). It is recognized that exposure to sexual exploitation and violence may lead to higher levels of depression, anxiety and PTSD which influences survivors' social life

and self-esteem. Therefore, it was crucial to assess the mental health status of the participants, the level of psychological distress and to identify symptoms that could influence their participation into the research process and its content.

As a screening instrument for mental disorders, we selected the ***Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-20)*** developed by WHO (World Health Organization, 1994). It has been validated in several countries and thus it allows comparison of results with other studies in the South Asia Region. It is a screening questionnaire of 20 questions with dichotomous response (Yes/No) that allows the identification of mental disorders. The scores range from 0 to 20. The highest score signifies that more symptoms are present. The translations in Nepali and Bengali were provided by WHO and the questionnaire was administered by the interviewer. For the analysis of the results we choose not to use a cut-off score due to variations between countries and its cultural sensitivity. There is no validation in Nepal despite the use of SRQ-20 in several studies (Wright, Nepal, & Bruce-Jones, 1989). The SRQ-20 has been used in other studies in Bangladesh but no cut-off score was used (Tsutsumi et al., 2007).

For the assessment of psychological distress, we selected the ***Impact of Event Scale-Revised*** (IES-R) (Weiss & Marmar, 1997). The IES-R is a self-report measure of subjective distress related to a traumatic life event. Respondents are asked to select a stressful event in their life and indicate how much there are bothered the past 7 days. Then they rate each of the 22 items according to a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The total range score is 0 to 88. The higher score reveals higher intensity and frequency of symptoms. The total mean score ranges from 0 to 4. As there is no defined cut-off points for IES-R, the results were analysed by comparing sub-groups of participants.

The ***Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*** (MSPSS) was developed by Zimet et al (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) to subjectively assess social support system. It comprises 12 items that address social support from *Family*, *Friends* and *Significant Other*. The degree of perceived social support is rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 'very strongly agree' (1) to 'very strongly disagree' (7). In the Bengali version translated by the Department of Psychology at Dhaka University, only 5 point scale remains from 'strongly agree' to strongly disagree'. In order to correspond to standard MSPSS scoring, the results were adjusted. MSPSS in Nepali was translated by the researcher. For the purpose of this research, assessing the social support is of main importance as it defines the support survivors would find during the post- exploitation period (Hall, Bonanno, Bolton, & Bass, 2014). The range score is 12 to 84. The higher score represents extended and steady perceived social support.

The ***Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*** (Rosenberg, 1965) is a short questionnaire of 10 items that produces score to measure individual self-esteem through positive and negative feelings about the self. Respondents are asked to rate on a 4-point scale 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The scores range from 0 to 40; the higher the score is the better the self-esteem is. Self-esteem pervades all areas of life: from social relationship to body image. It is an attitude that allows an assessment of oneself based on beliefs, skills and abilities (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). In this research, assessing self-esteem provides information on the adverse effects of exploitation on survivor's view of themselves. We also explore the link between self-esteem and mental health status, higher self-esteem expressing a better psychological health.

The **WHOQOL-BREF** was developed by WHO (WHO, 1998) to assess the individual's perceptions of quality of life 'in the context of their culture and value systems, and their personal goals, standards and concerns'. The self-report instrument comprises 26 items, which measure four domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. For each question, there are 5 possible answers scoring 1 to 5, which varies according to the questions. The total score ranges from 26 to 130. Higher score represents better quality of life. Adapted versions of WHOQOL-BREF in Bengali and Nepali provided by WHO were used for this research. The Bangla version has been validated for use with adolescents in Bangladesh (Izutsu et  al., 2005).

The **'2-test behavioural assessment'** is a revised version of the 3-test behavioural assessment (Rae, FITOL, Chartered FCIPD, & Chapman, 2004) which was created in order to assess behavioural ability, self- perception and ability for change before and after participating in a training. For the purpose of this research, we decided to conduct a baseline and an end line in order to measure any changes in the respondent's behaviours and self-perception that would occur after participating in the research. There are 4 possible answers – instead of 10 originally proposed in order to facilitate the answer. A four-point Likert scale has been retained corresponding to 1 (not at all), 2 (sometimes), 3 (most of the time), 4 (all the time). The range score is 18 to 72. The maximum score shows a higher level of awareness of oneself and others.

### c. *Pictorial method*

The pictorial method was used with the objective of introducing the session with a media that allows the participant to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions in a way that she will not be directly confronted to them. A tool often serves as a support for expressions and therefore the participant's feeling of trust is not tested.

The **Life line milestones** is a pictorial method where the respondent is asked to draw a life line starting from their childhood to their present life indicating any important event on the upper part if positive and lower part if negative. By creating a visual representation of their life, respondents are encouraged to discuss about their emotions in relation to negative events as well as positive events in their life. There is no  original version of this method; we referred to the one described in the Child Protection psychosocial training manual developed by Foundation Terre des Hommes (Meuwly, Heiniger, & O'connell, 2008) because it is suitable for children and adults with low literacy level.

The **Family Tree** represents family relationships and provides genealogical data of the respondent's family. Assuming that family representation is not a common exercise for respondents, it was suggested to visualize her place in the family by drawing a tree and to discuss roles and relations within the family. This technique is commonly used in various fields such as social work, research, family therapy, etc.

The **Johari window** model was developed in 1950 for researching group dynamics (Luft & Ingham, 1950). Its relevance for improving inter-group and interpersonal development has been demonstrated in various contexts. This technique is a pictorial method that represents information

(skills, experiences, qualities, attitudes, intention, etc.), easy-to-use for understanding relationships with others and with one's self. It is illustrated with 4 rooms: open, hidden, blind spot and unknown. The first quadrant represents the traits of the individual that both they and others know about them. The second corresponds to traits that the individual knows but is not recognized by others. The third one characterizes information about the individual that only others are aware of; the fourth one refers to information that neither they nor others know. In the original version, respondents are given a list of 56 adjectives and are requested to pick up 5 to 6 that would describe their personality. For the purpose of this research, the list was not used and the instructions were given in a way that the person would be invited to give examples from her life for each quadrant. We used it in order to better understand how the respondent sees herself and how she imagined others' view of herself, how much she can reflect on herself and on other's view of herself. It is rather important when we explore social and self-stigma as well as the respondent's capacities for acceptance, empathy, cooperation.

The **Spider diagram** (Stapleton, Taylor, Thompson, & Howse, 2009) is a tool widely used for planning, mapping ideas, provoking ideas such as in researches. One of its advantages is that it is simple and easy-to- use. It also allows visualizing a central idea and it ends as drawing a structure that shows its interrelation with other topics and ideas. We use the Spider diagram to investigate and enumerate various aspects of a single theme or topic, helping the respondent to organize her thoughts. In that sense, the process of creating a spider diagram helps the respondent to focus on the topic, and to monitor her growing comprehension of the topic.

The **Mental Health Recovery Star** (MacKeith & Burns, 2013) is a tool that aims to assess changes as a result of intervention in people who suffer from mental illness. Based on the fact that recovery implies changes in life and the pattern of recovery is rather similar, the tool allows reflecting on how changes occurred, where the individual stands for and aims at. We were interested in this instrument as it is described as a journey through recovery. For the purpose of this research we used it to help the respondent to situate where she is in her journey referring to some areas in her life as we considered important to suggest a tool that would allow the respondent reflecting on changes in her life and her actual situation. The tool comprises a picture of a star with 10 branches that corresponds to 10 areas of life: managing mental health, self-care, living skills, social networks, work, relationships, addictive behaviour, responsibilities, identity and self-esteem, trust and hope. In order to help the person to identify changes, there is the Ladder of change which shows the five steps of changes in relation to each area of life. The bottom of the ladder starts with the feeling of being stuck, then accepting help, believing, learning, and at the top we can find the last stage which is self- reliant. The person discusses and agrees with the interviewer on which step she is. Then she is invited to share about where she is now. The authors do not suggest that this is done routinely, nor could they claim that 100 is "the highest level of recovery". Thus, a 10 in each area means the person is self-reliant, that is, they do not need support from a service in that area, and they can function well without it. The Instrument was directly translated orally by the researchers to the participants as we wanted to keep some flexibility and openness in the discussion knowing that the tool would require more explanation than the translation would provide itself.

The **Body map exercise** is a pictorial method that allows knowing better participant's ideas about physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing and eliciting the characteristics participant associate with  well- being. The body image is a mental representation the individual creates according to what he/she thinks he/she looks like. It is influenced by external and internal sources. It is related to self-esteem. Due to the situations of violence and exploitation respondents have been through, it is important to explore their self- esteem and self-image in order to understand how they have been affected or not. The respondent is asked to choose, draw and comment on a person that is going well and another one who is not going well. Then she is requested to draw herself and to point which part of her body suffers. Bodily sensations and emotional states are linked and culturally universal (Nummenmaa, Glerean, Hari, & Hietanen, 2014). In case of sexual violence, women tend to present severe somatic symptoms (McCall-Hosenfeld, Winter, Heeren, & Liebschutz, 2014)

**Monodrama with objects** is a method that uses objects, songs, and drawings as a mean to express emotions, thoughts, internal and external dynamics, etc. It gives the opportunity to re-enact some conflictual elements with the support of an object or else which becomes the space for identification and projection. It is extensively used in the frame of diverse psychotherapy for children, adolescents as well as adults.

## Translation

When possible, Nepali and Bengali translations were provided by the authors. For the ones which do not already exist in Bengali and Nepali, we performed a back translation in order to improve the reliability and validity of the tools. Questionnaires were translated from English to Bengali and Nepali and then back to English by another translator. Then it was reviewed by an independent translator who compares the two versions in order to ensure the exactness of the translation. Only one tool was not translated: the Recovery Star. Due to the design of the tool, based on conducting other questionnaires previously and including the fact that the tool would require plenty of explanation, it was decided that oral translation on-site would benefit both the researcher and the respondent.

## Supervision process

Considering the emotional and physical violence the participants have been exposed to, we originally considered that researcher's feedback should be recorded and analysed as part of a set of secondary data. It would allow to better identify the emotional content of the session and to better understand the incidence of the counter transference on the interview process - which includes unconscious reactions by the researcher to the respondent.

Participants of this study have been through various violent and potentially traumatic situations. In that context, researchers require specific qualities that cover a wide range of attitudes, behaviours like empathy, etc. Studies have shown the effect of secondary trauma among mental health professionals providing psychological support to survivors of sex trafficking (Kliner & Stroud, 2012).

Often - and that is the way trauma works through - the person describes a situation using his/her visual memory. The lack of psychic elaboration that affects this recall may also affect the person who is listening to the story. Silence, participant's difficulty to express emotions or opposite the impossibility to contain the flow of emotions in relation to the event, the avoidance, are all expressions that are induced by the research. In that situation the method of supervision is important to identify the mechanisms at work during the meeting and to prevent the development of secondary trauma with the researcher. Unless the researcher has a valuable experience with survivors of sexual violence, it is always appreciated to have an expert to discuss with and give an external point of view on the context and content of the research. This was achieved through supervision meetings between the Principal investigator and researchers.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

As part of the methodology was based on the analysis of the data recorded it was recommended to analyse the data as soon as they were collected. After each session, the semi-structured interviews were analysed by the researchers and the principal investigator. During the first level of analysis, clarifications of the content, additional information on the context (presence of another person during the session, political events that prevented freedom of movements and created stress, relations with the NGO's staff, etc.) were sought for a better understanding of the interview's content and the attitude of the participants during the interview. Interpretation, elaboration, inferences completed the secondary level of analysis. Added to this, the feedback from the researcher was explored and recorded. Next, the follow up session was discussed.

The qualitative analysis of the interviews was performed with a semantically approach based on research objectives. Thus, a series of codes were pre-selected. Additionally, through an in-depth exploration, other themes have emerged from the respondent's narrative and were analysed following a grounded theory approach. The open coding was used with a verification mode: when an emerging theme appears then the same theme was searched and coded. Then the main categories were designed as follows: i) life conditions during childhood; ii) family situation prior to trafficking; iii) the journey to sexual exploitation; iv) life in exploitation, v) the post-trafficking period.

Table 1: Open and Axial codes used for qualitative analysis

| Categories | Open codes | Axial codes |
|---|---|---|
| Life conditions during childhood | Domestic violence Absence of parent Child labour Level of education | Family vulnerabilities Individual vulnerabilities |
| Family situation prior to trafficking | Marital status Number of children Parents involved in the decision making process | Decision making process Family roles in decision making process |
| The journey to sexual exploitation | Relationship with the trafficker Knowledge about migration Understanding of being trafficked | Apprehension of the unknown |
| Life in exploitation | Violence by traffickers Deprivation Psychological distress Support from people Rescue/escape | Surviving exploitation Relationships with others Building up on vulnerabilities |
| The post-trafficking period | Prosecution of traffickers Social support Disclosure Occupational activities | Adaptive resources Barriers to reintegration |

The quantitative analysis was conducted at the end of the research. The quantitative data were stored and analysed using *MS Excel*.

The analysis of the feedback of the researcher was completed using an observation grid (see Annex 3:
*Observation grid for researchers*) at the end of the study.

With a selection of 13 participants, generalization of findings would be uncertain. However, it does not affect the validity of results collected through those 72 sessions. In order to generate the most valid data and to present them in this report, we have divided the presentation of key findings in two main parts. The first level of data analysis comprises the observations from the primary data, and then the second level present inferences built on these observations.

## 5. CRITIQUING THE METHODOLOGY

Researchers who collected data were asked for their feedback on the methodology being used in the research. Their feedback included both merits and demerits of the research. Based on feedback from researchers:

**Advantages of the methodology:**

1. Facilitated disclosure of information more than the expectations of the researchers - semi structured nature of interviews created a safe environment for maximum disclosure. The research process did not intend to act as a catharsis although it was anticipated that some participants might benefit from it. The flow in the process from looking at the past to assessing the present and projecting into the future helped participants to reflect on their experiences.

2. Inviting participants for consultation meetings finalizing the methodology helped in developing trust between the participant and researcher. Even though the participants did not suggest any significant changes in the research framework, it probably accentuated the commitment of the participants to the research and it strengthened the confidence of the research team.

3. Most of the tools were considered useful and easy to administer. Beyond the measurement, tools also brought more information and emotional reactions, which were positively dealt with by participants and researchers.

4. The supervision process helped in reflecting on the research process, which is so important in a qualitative methodology. Reflection on the researcher's role, its personal implication, the dynamics with the participants helped the researcher's adjust their approach. Transference and countertransference were inherent processes in this research therefore unconscious movements of identification, projection, and displacement occurred and could be identified during the supervision. It ensured a continuity between the sessions and some consistency between researchers.

5. It is noteworthy that working through transference and countertransference within a research process is complex and difficult. All researchers have actively participated in the supervision and have benefited from sharing their doubts, their emotions, and their intimacy as much as they could. This process was originally foreseen to analyse the latent content of the interview – what the participant does not express – but considering the good level of disclosure and the low level of information withholding, the content of the supervision did not analyse those details. Nonetheless, it was surely an added value to this research as it allowed the researchers – and indirectly the participants – to be accompanied emotionally and cognitively through the whole process.

6. The group sessions allowed researchers to listen to and understand the perspectives of other mental health professionals, sharing experiences and challenges in using instruments and conducting interviews. The discussions in the researchers' meetings, the presentations and sharing of emotions, identifying patterns and empathising with each other's difficulties in certain sessions made the sharing processes easier.

## Challenges in the methodology

1. As it was anticipated, the methodology did not take into consideration the context in which the participants were living. As a consequence, some questions from questionnaires were not always totally suitable for the participant.

2. Ideally, we are aware it would have been even more profitable to pilot test all the instruments before using them but the time and resource limitation of the research did not allow it. With participants with low level of literacy it would be recommended to adapt the language and the structure of the questionnaire to that extent which would have been easier for them to understand. For example, the 2-test behavioural assessment requires standardization of language. The level of understanding is low and challenge the participants' ability to conceptualize intellectual abstraction. It may have hindered the validity of some results. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale is suitable to people who have some level of education and is able to articulate. There are lots of psychological terms that were difficult to breakdown and explain to the participants.

3. The context by itself was quite challenging. Accessing survivors in their locations meant visits to the RLA, to places in Bangladesh amidst political turmoil, in shelter homes with very little privacy was challenging. Safety and security was an overarching contextual factors that needed to be managed. Conducting a research in a shelter home, in a red light area (RLA) or in the premises of a service provider like an NGO may influence the attitude and emotional reactions from both the participant and the researcher. It is therefore important to differentiate what pertains to the context and what is structural. As example, despair expressed by some participants may be a sign of depression or a reaction to their actual situation. Then the researcher may have to deal with his/her own helplessness to save the person from an inextricable situation.

4. The range of emotions that this research generated needed to be managed and channelized. From despair and anger, helplessness and hope, depression and exaltation, to lack of expressive reactions, the spiral of emotions was intense and unpredictable. In order to manage those emotions, the researcher had to be prepared to identify those emotions within self and deal with it in order to be able to analyse the situation and the relationship with the participant. For example,

the anger expressed by some participants led the researcher to explore the role of that emotion in the situation of the research and its meaning in the context of trafficking. Also, the lack of expression disturbing and generated heightened reactions. It made one of the researcher deal with her countertransference to understand its meanings and accept it.

## General limitations

- The number of participants in this study was rather small. And the presence of participants from two different nationality added to the size of the groups. But given the number of sessions and the amount of data collected, the qualitative analysis allowed some observations and highlights key findings. Additionally, some topics have emerged throughout the sessions and led to further research questions.

- Although the instruments were translated in the participant's language, not all of them were validated for the population of Nepal or Bangladesh. The comparison of results was therefore limited but it showed the need for other studies with the same population in order to capture the cultural sensitivity of the scales and pictorial method if any.

- We favoured the analysis of individual processes even though we also considered contextual analysis. Indeed, being in post-rescue period was not comparable to having returned home and it required different information and emotions processing. This information was taken into consideration in the analysis but the cross-sectional analysis did not allow a deeper consideration of the context and its consequences on the participant at the time of the research.

- The supervision process of the researchers has been recognized as an important aspect of the research by the researchers themselves. Nonetheless, either too intimate to be shared in the report or not enough elaborated to bring new perspectives on the sessions, it provided limited results to be analysed but valuable information regarding the dynamics between the respondent and the investigator.

- Researchers were selected for their professional background and their interest in the research topic. As per the methodology designed, having mental health specialists was an added value for this research some participants could appreciate the quality of the relationship established. Where ones would see some biases, we considered that they benefited from empathy and attention probably at higher level than commonly offered in researches by other professionals. Having a multidisciplinary team would have probably brought other qualitative results. This could be explore further while questioning the role of a researcher interviewing participants with trauma. Survivors have found difficulties to recount memories and this leads to unreliability of some data that they may have collected, inconsistencies therein. And therefore, only trained mental health professionals are able to create a relationship with survivors that could create sufficient safety for them to delve into the unsafe within her mind, her memories. Moreover, they can deal with traumatic narratives and emotional load of participants.

- Despite these limitations, we believe that our study brings valuable analysis to explore further unanswered questions on child trafficking and to open new areas of reflection for researchers and service providers.

## 6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to time constraints pertaining to the short duration between the approval of the research and the launch of the research, requesting approval from an ethical committee was not possible even though we recognized that it would have been highly preferable. A letter of information and a letter of consent were signed by participants (See Annex 1). They were informed that they can end up their participation at any time and without any consequences. The letter of consent is a consensual process and it seems like giving their consent provided them with some kind of control over their life and reinforce their decision making process in a situation where they are deprived from it or where it is weakened (by living in the centre).

Participants have faced various aversive situations that have created internal reorganization which has developed into resilience for some of them and into a repetition of harmful situations for others. Having been exposed to potentially traumatic situations do not necessarily mean that the person will present psychological disorders but it is important to take into consideration that potentially traumatic situations they faced may have influenced the development and therefore the various choices the person has made in her life till now. Besides, interviewing a trafficked person requires to pay attention to the person's safety and to provide an ethical framework. In order to establish a safe and ethical framework, we referred to WHO (Zimmerman & Watts, 2003).

Prior to the start of the research, the researcher met each participant to explain the objectives of the research, its content and its specificities. In order to ensure that participants are fully aware of the research project's objectives and methodology, they were given information on their participation in a research on children who have been forced to exploitation. Instructions were given as follow: *'we invite you to participate in a research on children who have been forced to exploitation. During this research, we will meet six times during which we will discuss about your life experience as well as your family. We will propose you questionnaires and semi-directive interviews. This research intends to help other children who have been into the same situation to better protect themselves and as a whole to better prevent child trafficking'*. They were informed that they would participate in 6 individual meetings during which they will discuss about their life experience as well as their family life. They were also informed that they will be proposed questionnaires and semi-directive interviews.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, special attention was given to anonymity, confidentiality and data safety monitoring plan. Interviews were recorded and transcribed on software forms and kept secure. Data were entered and analysed using subjects' identification number only.

# CASE NARRATIVES

## 1. PORTRAIT OF RAHINI: THE CHILD WARRIOR

**Rahini was about 45 years old, from Bangladesh.** She lived in Bowbazar, one of the biggest Red Light Area in Kolkata. She was married and had 5 children. Her living conditions were pretty good considering the living area. She had a small business and she owned her home. She was sensitive, emotional, and her genuineness contradicted with the common attitude of sex workers according to her. She was a true story teller and her life was like a novel.

Rahini lost her dearest ones at young age: her father died when she was very young and she became a financial support for her mother and her elder sister. Later, her mother died in her arms. She described the scene almost as an honour and intimate moment. She kept her mother's pictures close to her and she still cried when she thought about her. Her mother for whom she had unconditional love meant everything to her; Rahini was very protective towards her and she was totally dedicated to her: she would beg for her food, would do all the house chores. She endorsed the parent's role without any complain but with pride and seriousness. Her elder sister whom she cherished and protected like her mother died during delivery. Sometimes after that her mother passed away, Rahini has got married and had 3 children. Her husband whom she truly loved seemed to have been a good figure in her life. Their relationship was normal and her life was good till he was present.

Then he decided to marry another woman without Rahini's consent. When her husband chose another woman, she felt betrayed and she filed a case against him. He gave her some money for her to leave. In order to protect her children, she left them with their father and out of rage she left to India leaving her children behind. She was 20 years old. Through her network she met a person who offered her to work as a sex worker. She agreed and she worked as an *adhiya* for 7 years and she travelled a lot.

She was convinced no one was in Bangladesh for her and she would never go back to Bangladesh so she built her life in India. When she evoked her past life she became emotional: the souvenir of the loneliness, the pain and physical suffering she endured made her cry. Her life as a mother was very important in her story. Her desire for maternity and/or motherhood had always been very strong. Even after she arrived in India, she wanted her own family – a husband and her own children - and she wanted to be able to raise and protect her children. She married her second husband in Kolkata. She had 5 children (4 daughters and 1 son) and 5 grand-children (2 boys and 3 girls).

Among her children, her youngest daughter (11 years old) was her *lost and found daughter.* While she was still a baby, she was kidnapped and sold in another Red Light Area. Rahini did everything she could to find her baby. She narrated it as a movie the tantric who asked for sexual favour, her trip to the other town, the way she found the woman, and finally how she has got the necessary

help to find her baby. She was very proud of herself: she fought for her baby and she managed to protect her by taking her back with her. Her story was really touching and the image of herself as a mother was moving.

At some point, Rahini wanted to leave the Red Light Area but lack of financial support and lack of a good opportunity made her come back and stay after trying to live with her in-laws. She had made her choice and she explained she'd rather sold herself than be a slave and being disrespected by her husband's family. She chose to become self-reliant as she was more in control of her life.

Rahini constantly mentioned her role and responsibility towards herself and other people around her. She indeed became adult at early age (she took care of her mother) and that probably had influenced her life's choices in many ways. She may still favour that part of herself as being a good image and giving a meaning to her life. Nowadays, her relationship with her children was tense; they were physically and psychologically abusive with her. Her relationship with her husband was chaotic but remained. She played a role within the community but they tended to see her as different.

Rahini was very deeply connected with her emotions and used a lot of imagery, songs and symbols (cultural symbols) to often symbolize and cope with her pain and joys. Throughout the sessions, she persistently highlighted the importance on being literate and educated. At the end, we understand that the fact that her life story was written somewhere (in this research) meant a lot to her: it was like a testimony, it was an opportunity to share her life. It also meant a lot to her as she would never be able to do it herself and would always depend on someone else to do it for her.

## 2. PORTRAIT OF JAMILA: THE SPLIT SOUL

**Jamila was about 35 years old, from Bangladesh.** She came from Bangladesh to India 5 years ago with her daughter who was 11 years old. Jamila worked as a sex worker in Bowbazar, a Red Light Area in Kolkata. She had a strong personality, she was intelligent, pessimistic and anxious. She was able to reflect on other people's experiences and opinions on herself.

During her childhood, Jamila lived with her mother for whom she had unconditional love. Her father died when she was young and she was raised by her mother, who played both maternal and paternal roles. She described herself as rebellious, uncontrollable, and disobedient. Her mother was patient without any authority over her daughter. When she was 2 years old, her mother married her to a young man of 16 years old because she wanted to keep her daughter with her. They lived altogether and Jamila thought he was her brother. When she was about 16 years old her husband wanted to have sex with her. She then realized he was not her brother but could not live with the idea that he was her husband. She tried as much as possible to avoid any sexual intercourse with him. After one year, a baby girl was born. When her daughter was two years old, Jamila asked for divorce and also found another wife for her husband. She went back to her mother's home and took up a job as a community guard and worked at the police station for 7 years. She chose a job for which the main goal is to protect the community.

One day, she met a woman/trafficker who verbally abused her and cursed her. On her way home, still confused and affected by this meeting, she did not pay attention to the road traffic and was hit by a car. She was badly injured and went to India to get proper treatment. The accident almost took her life, left her badly injured but she was saved. That event acted as a turning point in Jamila's life. From that time, there was a 'before' and 'after' the accident. Then, she wanted to go back to Bangladesh but as she was preparing to go back home her mother died. She could not go to her funeral and finally she decided to stay in India.

While she was looking for a job, she met a doctor, through a friend's friend, who presented her to a madam: *'When I reached here the next morning, that lady sat me down and explained to me that wherever I worked whether in a hotel or as a painter or as a domestic maid, this is what I would have to do anyways. So it would wise to earn well and do this, support my daughter and bring her up well. I thought and realised what she was saying was true. And I stayed on here…so that's how I came here'*. After some discussion, she agreed to join the sex trade.

She still met with the doctor once or twice a year when she would ask him again and again to tell her the reason why he brought her there as if she was not responsible for herself. Guilt and self-blame prevented her from exiting from the sense of helplessness she carries. She had one main relationship with a man who offered her financial support and ensured her protection. They met on daily-basis and he was always there when she needed him. He was a central character in her life and it was like she considered him as a family member. Even though she had been living in RLA for years, she did not mention anyone else. Relationships in RLA are transactional and she also had got some issues in establishing relationships with other people. Outside of Bowbazar, no one knew she was a sex worker. She hid her activity from her daughter and anyone else. Interestingly, she compared herself with women living outside of the RLA and not with her peers. She dissociated both worlds, people and life.

Nowadays, Jamila was not satisfied with her life; she somehow despised her work and the money she made out of it but she also depended on it to build another future for herself and her daughter. There was overall a feeling of loneliness throughout the sessions. She felt she did not have any power over her life and stated that her daughter kept her alive. Her depressive mood was constant and prevented her from dealing efficiently with this feeling. Besides, she saw herself as living in a survival mode so she saw her life's choice as a no-choice but a choice for survival. This was very contradictory with the fact that she did everything in the way to prevent that her life from looking like the one of a sex worker: she lived outside of RLA, she did not take drugs, she chose when she worked, and she was independent. She has always wanted to leave that place but she never got an offer that suited her.

## 3. PORTRAIT OF DIPTI: THE BRIGHT GIRL

**Dipti was 17 years old, from Bangladesh.** She was 14 years old when she was trafficked. She spent 7 months in a brothel and she escaped. After spending 20 months in a shelter home in India

she went back to her home in Bangladesh. Dipti was sensitive, polite, energetic, and intelligent. During the research process, she disclosed her story step by step; she needed to feel safe to talk. She described her experience in trafficking emphasizing its physical and psychological consequences. Her level of self-awareness was good; she was very insightful. Her capacity of resiliency seems to be good even though it would take some time to confirm whether she is able to build her life in a constructive way.

During her childhood, Dipti was living with her aunt whom she thought was her mother. Her mother used to come and visit her from time to time; she would address her mother as her aunt. She was 9 years old when she saw her father for the first and the last time. She described herself as a naughty child. She was independent and she liked to spend time alone rather than having relationship with other children. When she was 11 years old, she went to live with her mother. Two years later and after numerous arguments with her mother, whom she repeatedly said did not understand her, she left her home with the help of a girl.

That girl was living with them, she encouraged Dipti to leave her home. After one more argument with her mother who beat her up – and this time she almost used a knife - she decided to follow that girl to her (that girl's) home before leaving to another town in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the girl was part of trafficking and when she followed the girl to that first place, Dipti was raped. She never thought she could be in danger and that situation was unexpected as well as shocking: *'I was not prepared at all for that as a child'*. After this traumatic experience, on her way to India, Dipti was given some drugs in her food and for one month she could not recall anything. She was sold in India, then she was sold again in Bombay and finally to a brothel in Pune. She stayed there for 7 months.

When she talked about exploitation, she described what happened to girls in general so it was difficult to know whether it happened to her or not (even though we can guess that it did). She tried to protect herself from difficult memories. She described violence, humiliation, drugs given for making porn movies and performing other sexual acts. The relationship between the girls in Red Light Area, when it is possible was difficult due to jealousy. Due to high demand for young girls, they were taken care of so she was provided food and medicine when she was sick.

With patience and a plan in mind for escaping, she managed to get some privileges from the brothel owner. When the opportunity showed, she escaped from the brothel with the help of another girl. Then she spent about 20 months in a shelter home. Meanwhile her mother visited her, which meant a lot to Dipti who saw a sign of her maternal love. She had an ambivalent relationship with her. She was angry at her, blaming her for the fact that she escaped from home because of her before being trafficked. At the same time, while she was in exploitation, she was wondering whether her mother would take her back with her.

Today Dipti lived with her mother with whom she still argued regularly. Now she knew how to deal well with people and while she faced social stigma, she dealt with it in an effective way. She was still in contact with girls who were in sex trade and she had wondered whether she should go back to RLA. She was quite ambivalent about that choice even though when she recalled how she managed to leave the RLA she could not foresee going back there.

She had filed a case against the trafficker who had been released and wandered around. She was

able to overcome some of the incidents she has faced and she has good inner resources. But the fictitious relationship with her mother and the lack of support might tend to slow down the rehabilitation process.

She was highly aware of her strengths and her limits. It sounded like she would not accept a traditional role as a woman; she could not go back to her previous life and the perspective she had before she left to India. Dipti studied in grade 10 and she wished to become a social worker.

## 4. PORTRAIT OF MOU: THE GIRL IN HURRY

**Mou was 22 years old, from Bangladesh.** She experienced two years of sexual exploitation before she was rescued by the police and sent to Rescue Foundation in Pune. She came back to Bangladesh in November 2012. She was very angry with the traffickers and she filed a case against them. Except her brothers and step-brothers (from her father's first marriage) people around her behaved well with her. During the research process, Mou showed signs of psychological distress when she recalled some memories about the trafficking period. She was very expressive.

Mou's father died when she was 6-7 years old. When she was 12 years old, her mother married her to a man who tortured her. Four or five years later she gave birth to her daughter (who was about 3 years old). Then her husband asked her to go to India but she refused and her mother took her back with her. It seemed that her mother had a strong personality (taking her daughter back from her husband), they were very close and she considered her mother was the person who understood her the best. Three months after a man from her husband's village contacted her and offered her to go to Dhaka for a job. She accepted and followed him; she was drugged and was brought to India instead.

On the way to Bombay, she was physically abused. She made a friend in the brothel, another Bangladeshi girl. Besides her, she did not have any other close relationships and found herself different from other girls accepting their living conditions in the brothel. It seemed she endured highly and chronically violent situations. Mou recalled physical violence, food deprivation as punishment meant for not obeying the Seth (brothel manager perhaps) and no health care. Expression of emotions were not allowed and any sign of distress was disapproved even by other girls. As a mother she felt distressed, guilty, anxious and responsible for having destroyed her daughter's future. After she was rescued, she spent some months in a shelter home in India. She was quite positive about her experience, her relationships with the staff, and the other survivors. At that time, she found some strength by living with other Bangladeshi girls.

Mou almost went from harassment from her husband to sexual exploitation. Within her marriage and then while in exploitation she endured multiple abuses. During exploitation, she was beaten up, was starved and was given poor food. She expressed that she repeatedly thought about committing suicide. Even today, she felt lots of pain (headache, stomach ache, pain in her arms and legs). She associated pain in specific parts of her body with the violence from her husband and mother-in-law and the physical violence she experienced during trafficking.

She expressed some guilt for the negative events she had been confronted with. Since her return home, she was facing a strong family stigma and was not allowed to go out from her home. She also suffered from social stigma due to her brothers' reputation - her family was known to be very religious so the focus was even more on her than it would have been if her family was not renowned. She had even been threatened to death by some family members if she left again. After she came back, she begged her brothers for forgiveness as she thought she was the one responsible for what happened to her. Because of depressive mood and social stigma she had isolated herself from social life. Added to this, the social pressure was very strong and it seemed that the status of victim was not easily acceptable or understandable in her situation. Fortunately she inherited from her father's property which prevented her from being obliged to work to gain money. Also, she received some amount of money from her husband after their divorce and her own mother had invested it so that she could have another source of income. Her mother was her best support and the fear of losing her daughter again made her be overprotective, keeping her at home all the time. Her family was trying to marry her off again.

Nonetheless, it seemed like her experience had brought some positive changes. She had noticed that her level of self-awareness was higher than before. Her level of trust was very low and she saw her future being alone, not needing to build a relationship with anyone. She had become strong-minded and wished to be financially independent from her brothers. Today, she had got some plans for the future and she would like to work as a tailor. She also expressed that she was not ready to have any relationship but at the end of the research process she was in contact with her ex-husband and wished to go and live with him again.

## 5. PORTRAIT OF PORI: THE SOCIAL PRISONER

**Pori was 27 years old, from Bangladesh.** She stayed in India during four and half months. She came back to Bangladesh two years ago. She had an overall good relationship with her family who also supported her. Her mother was her best support so far. They understood what she had been through and tried to encourage her to move on. Pori was very keen on sharing her story as she wished to help other people through her experience. During the interviews, she was loquacious and she evoked different scenes from her experience like a movie – step by step, image by image. This brought her some kind of relief.

Pori was born in a village in Bangladesh and lived with her parents till she was 10-12 years old- she was the eldest of four children (she had 1 sister and 2 brothers). Due to land erosion, the family moved to Jessore and they started to struggle financially. When she was 16 years old, her father married again. For Pori, it was like an abandonment and a turning point in her life. It was a painful separation that she never really recovered from. The unexpected situation weakened the family system embroiling them in a survival mode. Then, they struggled even more as her father could not support two families. Then, her family decided to marry her.

Her marriage went well and after 3 years, she truly loved him and he seemed to have been a good figure in her life. They had one daughter who was now 9 years old. Her husband left her and went to work abroad. After that a man who obviously craved for her money harassed her. Because of

this harassment and to protect his family reputation, her husband decided to divorce her. Then, one day that man who harassed her slipped inside her home and raped Pori. She became pregnant (her second daughter was 5 years old). She filed a case against him and after some negotiations married him in order to remove some stigma.

For Pori, he was the cause for the ruin of her life. They lived together for 3 years and he repeatedly physically abused her by beating her. He sold away many of her belongings. He also divorced her without telling her. He became more and more violent. When she found out that he had divorced, she made him paid her some fees for their divorce. Right after he went to her begging her to come back and live with him; he obviously wanted his money back. His mother and he did some black magic so that she would accept his proposition once again. After some months, she married him again.

These turn of events showed how Pori could be easily influenced and convinced. As many women being victim of domestic violence, the control he had over her was high and he was aware of it. He felt very confident on the fact that she would consent to his demand if he harassed her (as he has always behaved with her). As a consequence, she gave him half of the money back. And then he introduced her to the woman who led her into trafficking.

The husband and this new woman planned the trafficking and brought her to a place, made her think they were there to buy a car. They put some drug in her drink and transported her. She and another girl crossed the border during the night. They were kept in one house where they were abused. Then they left to Bombay where she was sold by her husband's second wife.

While she was in India, Pori endured physical torture and she suffered a lot. She was given sleeping drugs, tablets, alcohol and other things. She thought of committing suicide. Pori patiently planned her release. This seemed somehow unexpected from a person who had always been submissive to her husbands and had endured high amount of abuse, threats and humiliation. She showed she had the ability to plan, to protect herself in the phase of struggle and adversity.

First she became friendly with one woman and convinced her to make a call; she then managed to reach her brother and explained her situation. With the help of her mother who filed a case against the traffickers, they finally released her after a month and a half. In her mind, the amount of money given for buying her had already been paid back so she thought she could be released from the brothel. After being threatened by the Bangladeshi police, the trafficker brought Pori back to Bangladesh. She regretted that she did not tell the BSF that the other woman who accompanied her was a trafficker. After four months in a shelter home she went back to her home.

After repatriation, her psychological distress was relatively high: flashbacks when she recalled some situations, somatic complaints, irritability, and emotional disturbances. But she suffered in silence as she did not share her pain with other people. Besides, she had physical pain in her hands, on her neck, in her heart, near her genital region (during trafficking), joints of hands and feet (from the violence of her husband). She located her mental pain in her chest and her head: *'these pains are so intricately involved with me and my life that these will be with me as long as I am alive'*.

There was an overall feeling of victimization throughout the interviews: from leaving her village because of land erosion to being harassed by a man. It sounded like Pori was not prepared to face

any of the situations that happened to her and her coping strategies had been challenged several times. Nonetheless she always tried to see the benefit from any situation but this had some limits. The fact that she had her children seemed to have helped her in taking some decisions in her life. It meant that she was responsible for others. She also may have developed lots of insight after what she has been through.

Pori blamed her father and his wife for destroying her life. While she was in India, her father sold some of his lands to repatriate her so she kind of forgave him and their relationship improved. She also blamed her second husband and his wife; she has filed a case against the woman who trafficked her and her former husband as a partner in crime. He still contacts her but now she is aware that his goal was to make her drop the case.

She was determined that she was not going to leave the case. That determination protected her from further suffering. She would be deeply affected if they were not apprehended and punished. Her husband was out of jail but the case was going on. She was convinced that she would never go back and live with him, even though her family has been threatened by her husband and his second wife.

Pori tried to adjust to the environment, to get through by submitting, giving in. She always saw some hope. She did not give up easily. She has got effective coping skills. Pori did not disclose it to everybody, she has chosen to whom to disclose and she has got some support from the ones who knew. Even though she is affected by what people could say about her, she tolerated, did not respond back. She has found ways to deal with social stigma in order to protect her daughters. She considered herself more courageous and confident than she used to be. For the first time she talked about her plans for the future: working, selling sarees, she could foresee different ways to be self-sufficient and be able to raise her daughters independently. Financial dependency was a big concern; if she could earn money, it would help her rebuild her life easily; she displayed a strong life instinct.

## 6. PORTRAIT OF RANU: THE REBEL

**Ranu was 23 years old, from Bangladesh.** She was trafficked in February 2011 and stayed about two weeks in a Red Light Area in India. She came back to Bangladesh in June 2012, 16 months later. She filed a case against the woman who convinced her to leave to Dhaka. She described herself as cheerful, social, neat, tidy, and straightforward as well as bad tempered and irritable. She did not care about what people thought about her. She was assertive and positive and her experience in exploitation taught her about life. She also had a job that could be reinforcing her self-confidence and assertiveness. During the research, Ranu shared lots of insights and emotions and she described some episodes of her life with sincerity and lucidity. She seemed to be a very brave person. She expressed her wishes to have a relationship with a man but at the same time her feelings of mistrust might prevent her from meeting anyone. There was some ambivalence in her relationship towards men.

Ranu came from a very poor family living in rural area in Bangladesh. She had three sisters and three brothers. Her father, selfish and authoritative, was violent towards her mother and all their

children. It seemed that her mother was absent from Ranu's life physically as well as emotionally. The mother abandoned her children to protect herself from violence and meanwhile Ranu would take the place of her mother and would cook and care for her siblings. When Ranu was 12 years, her uncle - who seemed to be a protector - invited her to come to their home and to look after their son in Dhaka. She lived happily there for 7 months. Then her father forcibly took her back and got her married. During the following 5 years, she suffered humiliation and physical and verbal abuse and she had no peace. Her capacity to tolerate violence was very high. From a very young age, Ranu had witnessed and became a victim of violence from her father. Then she has endured violence in her family-in-law till she lived "like a crazy person". There was no one she could turn to for help. After 3 years, she gave birth to her daughter (the daughter was 7 years old now). Her husband finally divorced her and she went back home.

After her divorce, she was approached by a girl whom she knew from childhood. In many ways, the girl tried to convince her to come and visit her in Dhaka. Ranu was a bit suspicious and always refused. It is not clear why the girl chose her but we may suppose that she targeted Ranu because she was vulnerable due to absence of a male head of the house, unemployment and recent divorce. After the approval from her sister, Ranu decided to follow that woman to Dhaka.

At the beginning of 2012, she was taken to one house where she was threatened by some people. There was another girl along with her husband who explained to her that they have been sold and they would be sent to India. Then, they crossed the border and were confined in another house in Kolkata. During the journey to Mumbai, she was threatened enough that she did not dare ask for help. She ended up in a brothel where she was tortured for about 12 days. She described the pathways to trafficking as a reporter and the situation in the brothel as an observer. She found it difficult to talk about her personal experience and she'd rather talk about other girls' experience. She was visibly uncomfortable sharing intimate information about her personal experience with her clients. There was a lot of guilt within her. She blamed herself for what she did. She tried to find a way with religion to relieve her guilt. She kept repeating that she had always wanted to come back home and that desire to go back home helped her through her life in exploitation.

Ranu described her experience as *'resentful, uncooperative, not listening to what I want, always making a grumpy face, anger outbursts, not listening to what they want me to do'*. She had a constant fear of being killed, beaten up. She had always thought about escaping. She had to adjust to daily conditions that were awful according to her: food, cleanliness, sleeping. When she had problems, she would not find any support except from the people who also abused her.

Some of her relationships with clients were good. With the help from one client she managed to contact her father. Unexpectedly, her father did his best to rescue her. She planned her escape, which indicated that she still had some resources while surviving. She simulated some physical pain in order to reach the hospital; on the way to the hospital, she jumped into a police car. Then she was rescued by the police and sent to a shelter home (Rescue Foundation) where she stayed for 16 months. During rehabilitation, she appreciated staying in the shelter home as she felt safe; she made some friends with whom she was still in contact. She felt very close to them; indicating peer group support. She had the opportunity to learn some skills though she does not use them anymore. Upon her return to Bangladesh, Ranu went back to her parent's home and tried to adjust.

Today, Ranu had support from most of her close family members: her sisters, brothers (except one

brother), her mother and even her father – whom she forgave as he helped her - her aunt and some cousins. According to her, the fact that she was employed had brought her some respect from them.

She lived far away from her family and she met them occasionally. Her daughter lived with her mother and she did not see her often. She hadn't disclosed her experiences in trafficking to her family. She did not face any social stigma as no one knew about her story. She became assertive and she had gained some confidence in herself. The fact that she had escaped gave her a sense of value and improved her self-image.

The way she survived made her think positively. She also shared that she feels vulnerable being alone especially regarding the education of her daughter. She hid her sadness and pain from others, as she did not expect to get any benefit in sharing with others. Since she was trafficked, she did not trust people easily. Ranu mentioned her psychological pain essentially coming from her daily living conditions (poverty and struggle). She expected someone to support her and she believed the pain will be relieved. It seemed more like a social compromise; by saying that she looked for a partner who was caring and protective. But her situation (working woman, mother of a child, divorced) might prove difficult for her to find a husband. She was desperately looking for a change in her life, she looked for opportunities and so she preferred to give a better image of herself and avoided talking about her past experience in exploitation as much as possible. She was ready to accept her husband again as if the social acceptance of unmarried single parent was more difficult to face than the abusive situation she had been through with her husband.

## 7. PORTRAIT OF UPASANA: THE TACTFUL STUDENT

**Upasana was 18 years old, from Nepal.** She was 13 years old when she was trafficked from Nepal to India. She spent 9 months and a half in exploitation. One day, she escaped and went back to Nepal at the end of 2009. According to her trafficking meant *"to lose control over your own body, own wish and own freedom, where another person gets the benefit from our body and we become loser".* Exploitative world was about guilt, suicide, revenge, isolation. Upasana talked about her past experiences with detachment. She obviously does not want to bring her past back but at the same time it seemed that it gave her opportunities to understand her past differently. She acknowledged that she was trafficked because she was looking to fulfil her desires and other people's desires. She thought she could be trafficked again only if she was kidnapped or if she trusted some wrong people.

Upasana had a nice childhood even though their financial conditions were not good. She went to school till she was 11 years old. Then she had to take care of her mother who was sick. Her father seemed to be a good person, sensitive towards people in general. He has never had any negative behaviour towards her. She has two sisters - two elder sisters who worked in Kathmandu while she was a child and later on one left abroad to earn more money - and one brother. When she was 13 years old, her mother's distant relativenoffered to send her to Delhi to study; she trusted him right away. When she left home there were mixed feelings of fear for the unknown and happiness for fulfilling her dreams.

This relative of hers along with another trafficker (a friend of hers), arranged her journey to India. She was given some drugs and they travelled for a while taking buses, trains and vans before they ended up in India. She understood she was trafficked while already in India when one of the men left and went back to Nepal. The night of their arrival in India, the trafficker raped Upasana. Then she was brought to a brothel where she was raped again by the first customer. During exploitation, there were no close relationships with other girls in the brothel. From different people and also other girls in the brothel, she realized that the biggest threat was to leave the brothel.

Friendship was not allowed: competition, rivalry were probably encouraged as a result. She did not find any support while in the brothel. Coercive methods were used to prevent any social relationships. After 15 days in that brothel, she was brought by the trafficker to his own brothel. After some months, she met her cousin sister and a boy who came along with her. After 9 months, they made a plan to escape. One day, they escaped together and managed to reach Nepal. Her confidence came from the fact they could trust each other. The brothel owner had already informed the trafficking network that they were coming back to Nepal. Upon her return she did not know where she could stay and she stayed with her sister in Kathmandu. She worried about her family's reactions. She found out that her mother has filed a case against the trafficker. Both were arrested and sentenced (1 was a distant relative). Her feeling of revenge was very high. It sounds like she would only be relieved when they will all be sentenced. She hated both of the traffickers: one has got 17 years sentence and the other one has got 16 years sentence.

After surviving her experience of being trafficked and exploited, she felt more confident and clearly stated: *'no one can dominate me'*. From her experience of trafficking, she learnt how to be suspicious and assess new situations. She also learnt how to be resilient and move forward. Before coming back to Nepal, she thought it was her fault, she thought that people would not accept her but the opposite happened at least in Kathmandu.

Upasana failed to recognize the trauma so she had difficulties in overcoming some experiences of her past. Social stigma affected her psychologically. Also sexual abuse and mental torture left psychological consequences that she identified as difficulties in concentrating and memory loss. She made the best possible out of her experience for herself and her future, by studying and developing her self-confidence.

Upasana lived independently with other roommates; she had some financial problems though. She felt she was surrounded by caring and loving people. She had a good relationship with her mother who was loving, caring, helpful, and understanding. At the same time, she was also resentful of her mother as she thought that if her family and her mother had fulfilled her desires of education she would not have faced those situations. According to her, her family was responsible for her trafficking: lack of protection, inability to respond to basic needs.

She started to blame her family when she became independent and the family started expecting some financial support. She worked in the slums for community mobilization and her awareness of cause of trafficking improved. Her blaming her family and seeking answers to explain her experiences gave some meaning to what happened to her, it was a way of coping with her trauma. The questions remain: how long is it going to last? How is she going to deal with her parents?

She had disclosed her experiences in exploitation to her mother, father and uncle. She was not, not

close to her friends and her neighbours living in the village. She was very conscious of herself, her relationship with people and about trafficking. She was very straightforward. She was in the process of working through power relations and building her capacity to control the domination other people could apply on her. She was still not confident about some of her skills. She needed attention from others which probably affected her self-image a little. Nonetheless she felt confident about finding a husband and not accepting an abusive situation within the marriage.

Upasana had a strong willingness to do something. She wanted to be unique. Education was empowerment and she had completed her studies in social work till grade 10. Nowadays, she wanted to finish her studies and find some work. She saw herself in a profession in which she could support other people.

## 8. PORTRAIT OF RESHMA: THE WHITE HYMALAYAN SMILE

**Reshma was about 21 years old, from Nepal.** She came back to Nepal in July 2010 after spending 10 months in sexual exploitation she was very happy with her current life. She had the courage and confidence. She also mentioned that she was irritable and had flashbacks (one of the signs of trauma). She felt she was in control of her life and felt self-motivated. She has benefited from the support of Shakti Samuha. She had a high level of self-awareness regarding relationships. She could describe her feelings very well in an accurate and adequate manner. She was often concerned by what people thought about her which at times weakened her self-esteem.

While in the brothel she felt she was different from other girls (especially the ones who wanted to stay and the girls around her when it comes to education level and experience of trafficking). Building trust was difficult for her partly because she was more aware about other people's behaviours and also because she had been betrayed. There was also some self-stigma that prevented her from having new relationships. She emphasized that she gained knowledge from the research, especially about her feelings. It helped her realized her personal path. She also highlighted the usefulness of different exercises.

During her childhood, Reshma lived with her father, her mother, her grand-father and her grand-mother. When she was 6 months old, her father left the family because of the birth of a daughter. Then, he married again. Her mother did her best to raise Reshma without her husband. When she was 9 years old, she saw him for one day at her home. Then he sold the land where they lived. When she was 10-11 years old, her mother sent her to Kathmandu to work as a domestic labour. Reshma became vulnerable. At 13=14 years old, she came back to her village and her mother and her mother's friend convinced her to go and work abroad. She left to Kathmandu, they gave her some drugs and they crossed the border. She reached India and was sold. On the way to the Red Light Area, she realised she was being trafficked when one of the person who brought them to India left them. Besides, she was raped when she reached the brothel. That event made her more aware about what men can do outside their home.

It took her a month to realize that she had no options than to comply with the life in the brothel. Even though she resisted the brutality they used, extreme forms of control such as rape made her

submit to the conditions. During exploitation, Reshma had no relationship with other girls; there was no possibility to share pain and feelings. The brothel owner was all-powerful. There was competition to get customers as the less they earned greater were the chances of being beaten up.

She managed to forge a relationship with the brothel owner so that she would get some benefits. She won their trust by saying she would never go back to Nepal. During exploitation, she was given some medication but does not know what it really was; she experienced sleep deprivation. Reshma described scenes of torture: customers using razor blades and hanging girls on the ceiling. Some used to carry weapons. There was no one to protect them while they were with clients. Worries about the uncertainty of the future were constant: would she go back to Nepal one day?

She stayed 6 months in exploitation and a year and half in the shelter home. Then the police was bribed and Reshma landed back to prostitution. She stayed there 3-4 months more till a customer helped her escape. She escaped and came back to Nepal. She tried several times to escape, which shows her determination. Additionally, she had good resources even though they were challenged during exploitation. She was afraid of being stigmatized and rejected by her family; her brothel's manager as a threat and control tactic repeatedly said this. After rescue, the period in shelter home was also bad for her. She thought about filing the case while she was still in the brothel. She wanted also to prevent other girls to be trafficked. This indicated that she already had some coping strategies as she could think about taking action and she could see herself in another environment.

After she returned to Nepal, she did not contact her family for one year and half. She stayed in Shakti Samuha. Even today, if she needs help she would turn to Shakti Samuha rather than her family. When she needs she does not hesitate to ask for support. It seemed that she had found in the group of residents in Shakti Samuha's shelter home a basis to build her resilience process.

Reshma perceived support from most of her family especially her mother and her grand-mother – who lived in the middle-east. She described her father as authoritative, selfish, and difficult. He left when she was young and no bonds have been created between them. She had no feeling towards him and it was mutual. Interestingly, her step brother had warned her not to go abroad, about trafficking and today he does not show any interest in talking with her.

Reshma hadn't disclosed her experiences to anybody though she guesses that her mother knows about life in brothels but she doesn't ask her as it must be too painful for her. It seems that the silence rule suits everyone from her mother to family members and herself. They all share the secret and no one dares to break the rule. The community members have changed their attitude towards Reshma. She also avoided her neighbours. Villagers knew the trafficker and they knew about her trafficking.

According to Reshma, there are multiple reasons for trafficking and among them are economic condition and illiteracy. Adolescence is a sensitive age and she mentions that *'people cannot control themselves. This period is very vulnerable for both girls and boys to be trafficked'*. She heard about trafficking before being trafficked from her grandmother as they lived close to an area where many girls were trafficked by people looking for beautiful girls, by people who would bring girls to Mumbai. For several reasons (not being beautiful, low caste being obedient) she did not identify herself as a potential victim for trafficking. Also lack of food, clothes and education were

causes for trafficking as girls can be easily convinced to go away when they think their basic needs were not being met. Besides, discrimination between son and daughter could lead to neglect and therefore to be a target of trafficking. According to her, mostly relatives and community people were involved in trafficking.

Reshma still wondered why it happened to her. Her identity as survivor was very strong. She also lived with other women who had been trafficked. She had not come out from this environment yet and her self-stigma was very strong.

Her plans for the future were still hampered by her past experiences, and more precisely by the social stigma she anticipated. According to her, people's reactions came from their ignorance. She recognized the consequences of being trafficked on her life today. Her level of awareness and insight was very good. Education was important to her and beyond getting new knowledge and the feeling of empowerment, she saw its benefit in helping her fit into a 'normal life' again. Today, she wanted to graduate and become a tailor.

## 9. PORTRAIT OF SAPANA: THE ESCAPE HEROINE

**Sapana was about 20 years old, from Nepal.** She was trafficked in July 2008 and stayed 3 and a half months in exploitation in India. She escaped in November 2008 and spent 18 months in a shelter home. She came back to Nepal in June 2010.Sapana was autonomous and self-assertive; she described herself as empathetic and self-confident. Overall, she couldn't compromise, she was very genuine and straightforward. Sapana received some formal education which brought her self-confidence. She was easy to talk with, which was confirmed by the relationships she had with other people. She had an ability to overcome aversive situations without being deeply affected. Nonetheless, there was some guilt and fear in the way she described herself. She was very ambivalent about other people's opinion about herself: sometimes she did not care and sometimes she cared. She has learnt from her experience how to protect herself by not trusting others. She still does not know (or understand) the reason why she was trafficked.

When she was a child, Sapana lived with her parents, her two brothers, her two sisters and the whole family. She did not pursue her education as she said: *'there was no special reason to leave the school. I was not given any importance to go to school and never thought that school was important to me in that time'*. When she was 12-14 years old, she started to work in agriculture because of her friend's influence. One day she left home with two friends without telling her family. There was a contradiction in her narration between the image of a protective and careful family and the decision for leaving that place and leave to an unknown place. The level of risks taken were not foreseen. At this stage Sapana cannot explain the reason that made her leave except that she followed up some of her friends. She went to Kathmandu and worked there for 3-4 months. While she was there, a neighbour proposed her to sell medicine, she agreed and followed her; she later ended up in a brothel in India.

She clearly states that she did not think about the consequences of her decision. She left with friends, without money. She left home as she feared she would be married off at the age of 13 years. She ended up with a family and then accepted to sell medicines. Her dream looks like the life

of heroin in TV soaps: '*I did not think about anything. I did not have any fear just I had a dream to wear high heal shoes. I had dream, I would bring money'*. There is a part of denial in her decision. While in India, she learnt she was sold and then she realized she was being trafficked.

First she blamed herself, which is probably mostly due to the fact that the trafficker did not force her. The relationship with the trafficker was good before and she did not suspect anything till they acted badly with her. During exploitation, the brothel owner patiently tried to convince her to 'do bad work'. The relationships with other girls were not good and the communication with the customer was non-existent due to language barrier. She had a good relationship with the brothel manager. Sapana had to stay there because of her and that explains why she did not try to escape. She kind of found a mother figure in this woman who looked after her, providing her food. She also selected customers for her. Sapana avoided talking about her time in prostitution, she did not even name it. She always wished to be rescued but her fear of police prevented her from trying to escape. Because of different kind of threats she always refused any offers to be rescued. She had Indian and Nepali friends within the brothel. They were 5 of them and it sounds that their relationships were good. She described psychological consequences while in the brothel: sleep disturbances, anxiety about returning back and adjusting to life in Nepal. When asked about the situation she needed support, she mentioned with humour the support she needed to escape from the brothel.

Sapana was rescued by the police after 2-3 months and stayed in a government shelter home and Prerana (NGO in Mumbai) for 2 years, before being repatriated. She built good relationship with one woman in the shelter home who wanted to adopt her as her daughter. After being rescued, she did not want to come back to Nepal due to fear of rejection from her family and fear of social stigma. As soon as she was rescued by police she planned for her future. Her capacities for adjustment were very good: from one environment to another she managed to change her life perspectives.

Back in Nepal, she was supported by Shakti Samuha. She praised the organization; it was almost like a family to her. She gained some confidence after she came in the shelter home in Nepal; that encouraged her to develop relationship again with people she already knew though she now did not have any close friends. Was this a result of difficulty in trusting or the fear of sharing her life's experiences? From her experience in trafficking, she learnt she should not place her trust in anybody easily. She also learnt how to talk, what pain and sorrows were. She thought age played an important role in trafficking and felt that parents should be taught on how to protect their children from trafficking.

Today, Sapana had support from all of her family and her mother cared more for her after trafficking. She did not know whether they were aware of what happened to her. She did not have much contact with them and she avoided her neighbours in the village and that way the questions they could ask about her absence. When her father came to Shakti Samuha, no one told him about Sapana's story. She fears that her family's behaviour might change if they knew. She did not file the case against traffickers as she did not meet the traffickers long enough and she does not remember their face. She filed a case against the brothel manager. Today, she would like to study and to become a cook.

## 10. PORTRAIT OF SMRITI: MEMORY

**Smriti was 19 years old, from Bangladesh.** She was trafficked in April 2013 from Bangladesh to India and she was released about two weeks later. At the beginning of the interviews she sounded bit suspicious and acted like she was playing a game. It seemed that she has worked through some of the situations she has faced. Smriti presented a poor self-image. She disliked herself and couldn't understand why men were attracted to her. She was more concerned about her life in Bangladesh as a divorcee than as a person who had been sold in sexual exploitation. She stayed only 3 days so she does not have much experience about the exploitation except it was forced. However, she felt she had her own opinion on other people and felt more empowered to make something of her life. She says she had changed. She was more cautious and knew how to protect herself better. She was learning about herself.

Smriti came from a poor family and she was the youngest of 4 children. One sister and one brother died, only she and her brother were alive. During her childhood, the family struggled: her parents' workload, her dropping school because they could not afford to pay for her studies, the discrimination she faced as a daughter, her marriage, the domestic violence she endured. At different time, she found some support in the form of a teacher and the grand-mother in law. Smriti's mother seemed to be quite vulnerable and submissive. Smriti thought she is a very nice person and she was proud to have her as a mother. Her mother was always sick and her father was described as an educated man. She described her mother and the suffering she had experienced with her father and his family, which happened mostly before Smriti was born.

She studied up to class X. She has got married when she was 12-13 years old, and 3 years after she had a baby. After 3 years she got divorced due to violence and abuse towards her from her husband's family. She endured multiple forms of violence from different people who tortured her psychologically. She described the humiliation, the abuse, the domestic violence while she was married. Her son was also a victim of this violence as he would starve and not be given medical care. It was psychological harassment, physical threat: how did she manage to get out alive?

She explained that she was cursed by her mother-in-law and described how she ran away from her husband's place to her parents' home. Finally, she filed a complaint against them as they accused her of stealing. She blamed her father for her marriage as he took the decision without considering other people's opinions. He was, however, also the one who took her back home. At some point, her family wanted her to divorce but she did not. So when she has finally got divorced her family blamed her and their support was very low. Her brother used to physically hurt her. She endured lots of pressure and threats. As she could not feed her son, when he was 3 months old, he was taken care of by her brother and his wife. Today her son was 5 years old. She went to Dhaka for work then came back after two months. She was living quietly for 6 months when she decided to come along with her cousin to Mumbai. She had a conflict with her sister-in- law (who was caring for him) about the welfare of her son and then she left. She came to India on the 2nd of April 2013. In order to accept to do sex work, she was beaten up, not given medicine when she was sick. Besides, she had good and bad experiences with customers.

After 15 days, she was rescued. Smriti expressed her anger against the man who helped her in

being rescued. She was in contact with a man over the phone. She was mad at him as she thought she would be free within 3 days and she ended up in a shelter home for months. She thought she is being punished. She felt he had lied to her as he promised she would be back home in 15 days but she was still in the shelter home. She felt frustrated and helpless without any control over her life and that is expressed through anger against whomever she could find to blame. Since March 2013, she has been staying in Rescue Foundation waiting to go back home. She has got some friends with whom she can share her distress. During the course of the research she knew that the police pressurized her family to bribe them by telling them that their daughter will come back quicker if they paid. She also wondered what they already knew about her story and she was very anxious about it.

Smriti left home because she could not endure her father working hard but afterwards we understand that she left because she could not bear the situation with her brother as well. She thought that the desire to leave home started in childhood but was reinforced depending on the events the person faces in her life. Such desires and the family environment created some vulnerabilities in girls, according to her. She also stated that the roots were in the community: she hardly sees/understands/accepts that the causes could be in her family directly. She insisted on the fact that it came from the exploitation of her father by the neighbours. In her narrative she kept protecting her family.

She gave a good description of reasons women may have to leave Bangladesh and come to India: '*Bangladesh has very little scope of work, but Mumbai is vast, has lots of money, salary is higher, people are better, respect others and pay more. That's when people like me think that then it's worth our while to go there. There is a woman in our village who has made a lot of money by working in this line. She is the richest in the village. She lives in Mumbai. Her brothers also have lots of money. Our village girls come thinking that they will also make it big, and also listen to the pimps as they paint a very rosy picture about Mumbai or India. Both work'.* What she describes confirms that dream is stronger than the reality, especially when based on hopelessness. Additionally, according to her reasons for being trafficked included meeting with the traffickers, manipulation, abusive parents and other family members, false marriage and poverty. Beside, physical and mental abuse can lead the victim to accept any opportunities to escape from that situation. She felt some guilt while she was being trafficked.

Even though she has endured multiple forms of violence, she never sounded as a victim. She even showed good coping skills when she decided to file a complaint against her in-laws. The survival mode made her seek help to leave her husband and second time during prostitution when she thought she would die due to medical reasons. Again during exploitation, she has endured violence that she could not tolerate anymore. It sounds that she had dealt with it in a very efficient way so far. The feeling of self-reliance was very strong in her. She expressed some guilt about her situation. Even though, she confessed having more confidence in herself due to her trip to Mumbai.

Smriti had not really anticipated her return home. She had several options, some questions but it sounds that she had not really defined what she would do as it depended on the situation when she will arrive. She considers she has to be financially independent and she may go to Dhaka to support herself. She has almost no support from anyone except from her mother. Smriti talks a lot about her mother's suffering and she compares her suffering to her mother's. There was some kind

of identification mechanism that worked here. Does it help her to rationalize? Does it help her to deal with her own suffering? The researcher mentions the possibility of the identification to a role model. She mentioned her brother as an irritable person. It seems that she has got a good relationship with her father: she liked him because of what he could provide her and she feared him because of his anger. Her first cousin's wife was her close friend especially during childhood. Smriti loved her son a lot and mentioned that many people loved him as well.

Smriti realized that she would need to build up her life herself. Her son did not recognize her as her mother but she does not care about that. Nonetheless it made her the feel that she did not have any role to play in his life. Her brother is sick and her father is old. She can't rely on them once she goes back. She already knows what and to whom she will disclose about her stay in India. But her cousin who trafficked her seemed to have told everyone. Since Smriti left on her own will, she worried about what she will do when she went back home. She seemed very anxious about her future, as it appeared to be highly difficult to overcome. She was both worried and hopeful about her future.

## 11. PORTRAIT OF AMAL: A WORLD OF DREAMS AND DELUSIONS

**Amal was 20 years old, from Bangladesh**. In 2013 she was trafficked from Bangladesh to India and spent 13 months in sexual exploitation. She was rescued by the police in June 2013. She described herself as isolated, irritable, avoiding social contacts. She disliked herself physically without being able to explain the reason. She presented herself as a person who knew what she wanted and made her own choices. It seemed as though she believed she had some choices and she just had to exercise them (e.g. liking someone and getting married or not, earning money and looking after her siblings, etc.). She described herself as a social person though her self-image was rather poor. She expressed difficulties in comparing herself with other people and saw herself as self-sufficient.

As a child Amal lived in a rural area in Bangladesh. She was abandoned at young age by both parents, one after another. She was very clear in her expression of grief on being abandoned as a little girl. Her father re- married and completely disappeared from their lives after his re-marriage for which she blamed her step-mother. Her father was nice up to a point till her step mother did some black magic (made the father drink water with her menstrual blood) and apparently this magic was so powerful that no other magic could counter its effect.

She stayed with her mother who then re-married as well. The anger she felt towards her father for remarrying was not there towards her mother when she remarried. She believed that her mother was also tricked through black magic by the man who married her and that her mother was innocent. As a result, Amal was brought up by her paternal grandmother. She was in charge of one younger brother and one younger sister. An older sister has passed away and though she did not know the reason she suspected it was suicide. At some point, she took the responsibility on herself and went to Mumbai to find some work. She somehow abandoned her grandmother and left after a fight with her. The conflict became the precursory event.

She described well some parts of her journey and how she ended up in exploitation, or "bad line",

"number 2 business" as she called it. Amal crossed the border with one family from Bangladesh and she met an Indian family. She saw the husband as a protector while she knew that his wife wants to take her into trade sex. Then a Seth (brother manager/owner) took her as his maid to look after his children. It sounds like she knew what could happen to her but she did not do anything to prevent it.

According to her she joined the trade willingly – as opposed to forcibly. Regarding exploitation, she was living in a flat and used to share the money she made with the Seth. She had some freedom and she did not complain about that time. She also found some positive points: she could meet with people and forget her sorrow. She had a good friend while in RLA who could not help her but loved her a lot. She disliked having sex with customers not because of that fact but because of the consequences on her social image when she would go back home. She became defensive partly because of shame and partly fear that people would get to know about her life and stigmatize her. She was quite ambivalent about her time in exploitation. There were some uncertainties in Amal's feelings towards being involved in prostitution. Indeed, there was some ambivalence as it sounds like there was some curiosity towards the unknown and maybe the danger that came with it.

She did not like her body which can explain the reason why she used it as an instrument. It seems that there is a split between her body and her mind, which probably helped her to work in the sex trade by choice. For Amal, sex trade was a business: she provided a service and she got paid for it. She was never physically abused (with violence). It sounds that she set up her limits very quickly; she managed not to be sold again; she managed to find people to help her to go into the trade in a way that suited her. She was not afraid of anyone including the police.

Since her rescue she was staying in Rescue Foundation's shelter home. Amal was rescued though she did not want to be rescued. As a sex worker she intended to earn enough money for her and her siblings. She believed she was being punished. Living in a shelter home felt like she was in jail. She did not choose to be in that situation. She believed that the person who was her lover would come back for her even though she may not be able to get back in touch with the man; there was this illusion or delusion that many men loved or liked her and that she was at liberty to choose but currently she was inclined to reject everyone to take care of her siblings. This indicated the importance of interpersonal relationships and its complexities. She seemed to have difficulties in building the right distance with another person: too far or too close?

There was practically no social support available for her. She never had, she does not have and she will not have any support except from her grandmother. Her mother was married and was dependent on the husband (who already has another wife, living in the same house). Her grandmother was a beggar and lived in someone else's house and her father lived far away with his other wife, who she dislikes. She also disliked the man who has married her mother. Amal expressed her concerns for her brother and sister, her depression for not being able to see them for Eid. She cannot contact them as she does not have their phone numbers anymore. Nowadays, she solves problems by herself though she had a very poor self-image. She also mentioned lack of love and affection in her childhood. Perception of others was also quite negative. There was a tendency to melodramatize her situations as in reality she did get some support and people perceived her as loving and caring.

According to Amal, trafficking means that 'girls are taken out, sold off, and made to do bad work

(she used *Kharap Kaaj* as words – *Kharaap* means bad and *Kaaj* means work) and the pimps were earning money and becoming famous in the village as rich people'. She also stated that trafficking started in childhood. Regarding justice for survivors, she felt that: '*all those pimps should be punished… but I can't tell what kind'*. Finally, Amal did not seem really concerned by this issue of prosecuting the trafficker.

## 12. PORTRAIT OF SIYANA: THE LOVER AND THE HOMEMAKER

**Siyana was 20 years old, from Bangladesh.** She was trafficked in India sometime between November 2012 and April 2013. Her definition of trafficking was: 'how people entice women by lying or by giving false promises and then deceive them'. Since her rescue, she was living in the shelter home of Rescue Foundation for the last 14 months. Siyana had a fairly good self-image and she felt good with her body and the way she dressed. On the contrary her self-esteem was not that good as she was constantly and emotionally dependent on other people's appreciation of herself. Her anger was triggered by oppression, as a reaction to someone else's anger. She did not fear anything except from God. Anxiety and worries were related to her future of her return home. She did not know what to expect from her husband and her family.

Siyana had pleasant memories from her childhood that made her miss having her parents with her. She had a very good friend she could share her distress with. She faced some stigma from the community and from within the family because she did not live with her parents. When she was 5 years old, Siyana was abandoned by her father who got married again, after which she never saw him. For her, this event seemed to be a critical event in her life. It has affected her a lot and she was still very emotional about it. Even after her father left to Mumbai, her mother stayed on in the same house for about three years till she was asked to go away by Siyana's aunt and uncle. She believed her father loved her a lot when she was small but when he got married again and had two children from the other wife she was rendered unnecessary. When she was 11-12 years old, her father came back with his family for five or six months and then she went to live with them. She and her step-mother did not have a good relationship. Then she went through different situations where she was rejected from different members of her family.

Her mother was away working so she was left with her grandmother, who was described as very authoritative and somehow quite careless about the happiness of her granddaughter. She went to school till class VII (11 years old) and she decided she should help her mother and earn money. Then she was forcibly married for 7 months by her grandmother to one of her grandmother's brother while living with her grandmother. During this period, a tenant was the only person who looked to be supportive and prevented Siyana from committing suicide. Her husband behaved badly with her, he never understood her, never understood her feelings. He would request her for things she could not offer him due to her economic conditions and the relationship with her family. He never gave her anything.

Then Siyana went to live with her mother and could not find the support she looked for in her mother, who failed to understand her. Siyana did not understand why her mother left her and she somehow felt guilty about it. She realized later on that the man who paid for her marriage was living

with her mother. When she was 19 years old, she married again with a colleague of her mother's husband. Siyana's husband was described as a weak and loveable person. He was so far the only person that she really managed to take care of.

Because of disagreement with her mother she decided to leave to Mumbai to meet her father, the man who has abandoned her. During her childhood and later, Siyana had undergone rejection when she looked for attention and care. Her parents' separation and later the rejection from her mother, these two events led to her decision to go to Mumbai and to look for her father: it sounds like the quest of a little girl. Idealization of her father and desperate need for parental love made her begin her quest (more than a journey) to Mumbai.

She went to India with her husband and she got caught in the exploitation system with a *dalal* who threatened them and conducted her to prostitution. She calls it: 'the job'. She met one woman who helped her while in RLA. She bought her from a pimp and brought her to her brothel (most probably). Even at that time, she tried to get some help from her husband. He did not want to work, as he did not know the language. She made a significant comment: *'I wanted to save us both of but only he survived, I did not'*. As before, what is important for her was to protect someone. The image of the saviour in her was quite strong. Her husband was against it, he left after 2 months and she stayed. According to the researcher, *'it seems that she wished to live with this illusion or delusion that her husband was indeed a very loving man and who was completely innocent and she does not see how in the name of saving him, she had put herself in danger'*.

Additionally, she explained that girls should care about their own safety as men may have bad intentions. Siyana had learnt how to please men, how to fake pleasure (that she calls *a normal day at work*). There was no guilt when she talked about her life in exploitation: dressing differently (putting on a *bindi*), smoking, drinking alcohol. Did she experience it as another Siyana? Was it a way to please other people, which was a good enough reason for her? When questioned about her sexuality, she did not answer: she does not know? She can't say anything? She did not answer but talked about betrayal and her difficulty to trust anyone anymore.

Finally she stayed in Mumbai and her husband went back to Bangladesh. In Siyana's mind, the separation was temporary. She made sense of living in RLA as much better as they had planned to go back home during Eid, but having been rescued and placed in a shelter home appeared to be a punishment for her. Since her stay in Rescue Foundation's shelter home, she was able to distance herself from her life in RLA and she was able to realize the benefit of not being in sex trade anymore: getting respect, learning new skills, understanding the meaning of sex trade. According to her, justice for survivors would be: '*the pimps should be punished, at least one pimp should be punished so severely that others are afraid'*. As she did not see herself as a victim she thought that only girls who were enrolled against their will should seek justice.

Today if she were in need of support, she believed it is her husband who would support her and stand by her. She had no support from her family: when she called, no one answers the phone. This adds to the feeling of abandonment. When asked about her family she became overwhelmed with the idea that she was abandoned by her father and her mother. She stated: *'after that he left, my mother left, everyone left me and I became totally alone. That's why I pray to Allah that no one should have similar life like mine (weeps) – no one should suffer like me'*.

The impact of such abandonment probably had some consequences on the type of relationships she chose and the quality of those relationships. She worried a lot about the future, as to what would happen, where would she go? Where would she stay, what would she do? People may not like her current husband, then what would happen? Siyana would like to be there for others, but all her descriptions of her future life revolved around her having a supporting role that she would have to play to be with other people. Her sense of self-worth was related to how useful she could be to others.

Her relationship with her mother was ambivalent and dutiful: *'my mother made me suffer, my father made me suffer, if I think about all these, I will suffer more'*. And at the same time she carried on the idea that she loved her mother *'as she has given birth to me'*. She did not express any anger. All her resentment and anger seem repressed and appeared in the form of depression and victimization. All her hopes are pinned on her second husband who she believed will support and help her and take her back if she could establish contact. She was happier in the Red Light Area as they were together but she was not sure whether she would get him back and felt uncertain as the NGO would send her back to her grandparents' house. She needed to speak to her husband but feared that even this relationship might have gone bad due to non-communication. She seemed protective of him (because he has got children and he remained besides her while she was left alone by her family), she would find some excuses for his behaviours though she had begun to question his role in her trafficking. She kept lamenting about being punished by Allah for some unknown mistakes that she may have committed.

Besides, there were lots of unspoken around Siyana: she did not disclose her second marriage; she did not tell her grandmother she was going to see her mother in Dhaka; she did not tell her mother she left to India. Even though she was in contact with her grandmother she does not dare to disclose her experiences, as that was the only place where she could go back to after repatriation. Moreover, Siyana had changed: she sees the difference in herself as before she did not know about people and today she knew. She considered herself as a 'bad girl'. She now knew of the good and the bad (as in a Manichean system). Today she felt empowered while earlier she was used to rely on other people taking decision for her. She doubts about her capacity to have a happy relationship with someone.

## 13. PORTRAIT OF SAIRAH: THE ORPHAN

**Sairah was 23 years old, from Bangladesh.** She was like an orphan, the one who knew that the world was a hard place and had given up on love. She had been trafficked in 2010 and spent 36 months in sexual exploitation in India. She was rescued in June 2013. She was very distant from her emotions and one is left with the feeling of helping her or more precisely the child in her. Sairah saw herself as hard-worker, good learner and adjusting well with others. She seemed to be very resilient and self-assertive. She never presented herself as a victim. Her latent anger appeared to the fore in situations where she had to obey or she had to confront someone else's opinion. Sairah described herself as a flower which is interesting as long as she is fresh. She laughs and smiles but wasn't very expressive most of the time.

Coming from a poor family Sairah started to work when she was 9 years old. She suffered a lot during her childhood. She was neglected at a very young age due to lack of maternal love and physical violence by a mother who was very abusive verbally as well as physically. Sairah does not know the reason why her mother behaved that way with her. She was ambivalent towards her mother whom she loved as well as resented. She relates the violence of her mother to the absence of her father and the fights between her parents. Her father was never permanently there; she did not really know where he was. Her father's importance was related to the fact that he was never there, so by his absence he was missed by her.

Her paternal grandparents loved her and cared for her. She had a sister and two brothers but had no special feelings towards them. She tried to make her parents and siblings love her but it did not work out. Her family sounds more like a group of individuals than a family. She also does not seem to relate with people positively or negatively; she did not seem to have built any significant relationship with any of them. She studied till grade VII but did not like studying. Then she wanted to earn more money so she decided to go to Mumbai. She left when she was 19 years old. She associated her departure from Bangladesh with the lack of attention from her mother. Before leaving, she was aware she could find two kinds of jobs, a woman from her village explained her everything. This meeting sounds to be decisive in her choice to leave. At some point she is the one who provoked the separation by leaving home. Was she unconsciously expecting that someone, her mother, would come and look for her? Was she expecting that someone would worry about her? She described her journey: the people she met, how she was sold till she realized the deadlock in which she had landed. Before that the only danger she could foresee was of being caught by Indian police.

In the Red Light Area, she received some support from the brothel's owner who gave her some "woman education" and from customers. This woman (brothel owner/manager) introduced her to prostitution: she explained to her that she had been sold and would not return home for the next three years. This woman was never violent with her, and acted as a protector. Sairah finally found some kind of support that she never had before.

About her introduction to prostitution, it was Sairah's choice. There was no coercion. Then, it seems there was some kind of protection against customers who would be violent. She gets some help from other people, some other prostitutes would indicate the "best clients" and she would not be forced to have sex with a client if she did not want to. She felt loved and protected, she insisted on the fact that she has always been well-treated and never abused. It was the place where she received the best treatment ever. There were also customers who would be more appreciated: the ones who talked, the ones who had sex without violence. She was very open about her sexuality even though she may have felt guilty from enjoying having sex with some clients at some point (at the beginning). After a while, Sairah managed to get some freedom by having won the trust from the brothel owner. She was quite confident of her body image but she felt she had lost power over herself and her body. She could not control customers. She did not really like having sex. Nonetheless, she had a relationship with one customer for 6 months. She paid the madam to spend time with him. Later she broke up with him when she knew he was married. Then she met another man with whom she had some kind of friendship/ lover relationship. Since her stay in Rescue Foundation she has had no contact with him. Those relationships probably brought her some power over herself and others.

Sairah found some positive outcome from her experience, especially regarding her capacity to struggle and become more mature. It was probably not so much about her experience in sex trade than the fact that she left home and was by herself. She was very ambivalent about her experience: in one way she considered it as a waste and in another way she understood she would be different if she would have stayed home – which she praised as well. She learnt about life skills and was at ease while talking about sexuality and her experiences with clients. Nowadays, she felt more empowered and wished to be independent. She had learnt how to communicate with customers in order to protect herself from (verbal) abuse. She also learnt how to protect herself from STDs by using condoms and cleaning herself properly.

However her self-image was weak as she considered herself a bad person in relation with sex work. That could be a reason for her to return to the Red Light Area. She still has got some contacts and she missed the brothel owner. As a consequence Sairah was not sure she wanted to be rescued as she believed she would go home anyway as the madam had assured her. She was in denial till she asked for her money back and the madam would find some excuses to not give it to her. She mentioned that people from the RLA had discarded her since she left. She did not know she will be rescued but she was glad that she was safe and she could plan for her future. In Rescue Foundation, she had made 2 friends, besides her boyfriend. But the despair of staying in the shelter home was present. She seemed to be bored during the day and a longing and sadness for home crept on to her in the evening.

Sairah has anticipated her return home: the reactions from her family, her mother's reactions if she knows what happened to her daughter, the necessity to live on her own instead of confronting them, the need to be financially self-reliant. The neglect from the whole family followed her even after her trafficking. Even now, they did not try to contact her in any way. When she contacted them form Rescue Foundation, they only enquired about the reason why she left home.

Today, she had no support from any member of her family. It is possible that she had given up on any hope of receiving support from people that she knew. She also seemed to believe that she would have to work towards creating any positive relationships and that people will not care for her. Towards the end of the research, she talked with her family and she knew they were waiting for her. She has regained some hope and she was then able to make some plans. She had planned to disclose her experiences to her mother and see what her reaction would be; she wondered whether she would get any support. That requires some courage (and apprehension). She did not want other people to tell her family about her life away from home and she also wanted to file a case against the trafficker. She did not talk about justice for herself but according to her: '*girls who are still in the brothels, need to be taken out and rehabilitated and returned to their parents'.*

Since she found it difficult to trust people, she had planned on explaining her family that she would rather stay with them than go away for a job (with a person who could abuse her). She was aware that she would have to adjust to be able to stay with her family, by controlling her anger, by obeying more than before. It appeared that she would be able to handle social stigma quite well. Moreover, she had plans of marrying her boyfriend and come back to India.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS

## Descriptive characteristics

Time is an elusive and non-standardized concept. Dates corresponding to birth, trafficking and rescue are not very reliable. The study was designed keeping in mind the phenomenon of child trafficking, or being trafficked as children. However once data were being collected, it emerged that though girls identified in Nepal were fulfilling the criteria of being trafficked as children (that is below 18 years of age), the survivors from Bangladesh had been trafficked at 18 years or above. This departure from the proposed design presented an opportunity to compare the phenomenon of child trafficking and trafficking as young adults. Comparing this two sub-groups helped in understanding whether there are indeed any differences in the pre-trafficking vulnerabilities, exploitation and post rescue assimilation between girls who were trafficked before attaining the age of 18 years and those who were trafficked after.

Based on participant's information (excluding the two women who work in the Red Light Area), the mean age when they were trafficked was 18.5 years old (SD=3.99). It ranged from 13 to 25 years. The mean age when they were rescued was 18.7 years old (SD=6.2). It ranged from 14 to 24 years. The two women working in the Red Light Area entered exploitation system when they were 20 and 25 years old. The Jamila left after 7 years of work as sex worker and the Rahini still works as a sex worker without bondage.

For all of them, the period between leaving home and exploitation was imprecise. Results showed that time varied between 1 to 90 days - the average period was 22 days (SD= 47.93) - indicating the difficulty to get her bearings in time and the inconsistency within the trafficking system. Because of multiple changes during the journey, of traumatic situations faced by trafficked victims, the ability to locate themselves in time was impaired. Therefore, time could not be a valid reference and could not be interpreted.

The participants entered India between 2008 and 2013 except the two women living in the Red Light Area (Rahini arrived in India approximately in 1990 and Jamila in 2003). The average time spent in exploitation was 11.5 months (SD=23.3). The exploitation time ranged between 2 weeks to 7 years. Except the two women living in the RLA, participants were rescued or escaped between 2008 and 2013.

The mean duration between rescue and repatriation was 12 months (SD=8). For the 7 participants who were repatriated, 4 from Bangladesh and 3 from Nepal, the mean time between repatriation and the first interview was 25 months (SD=11.9). For the 4 participants who lived in the shelter home, the mean time between rescue and first interview was 13 months (SD=1.5). When collecting data it appeared that the concept of time was elusive. Age, dates and duration were not accurate and varied according to the source of information. In this context, with this kind of population, it is important to cross check information with the NGO.

_Table 2:_ _Descriptive characteristics_

|  | **Shelter home (N=4)** | **RLA (N=2)** | **Nepal (N=3)** | **Bangladesh (N=4)** | **Total mean** | _SD_ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Age when trafficked _(years)_ | 18,7 | 22,5 | 13,3 | 20 | 18,5 _(n=13)_ | _3,9_ |
| Mean Age when rescued _(years)_ | 19,7 | N/A | 14,3 | 20,87 | 18,7 _(n=11)_ | _6,2_ |
| Time between leaving home and exploitation _(days)_ | 37,5 | N/A | 16,3 | 15 | 22,2 _(n=11)_ | _47,9_ |
| Time spent in exploitation _(months)_ | 13,9 | 60 | 7,7 | 8,62 | 11,5 _(n=13)_ | _23,3_ |
| Time between rescue and 1st session _(months)_ | 3,75 | N/A | 46,7 | N/A | N/A | _N/A_ |

The sample of participants was rather heterogeneous: various ages, various periods in exploitation, and different living conditions. Broadly, the study covered a woman's vulnerabilities as a child that led to trafficking, the period of transit, the experience of exploitation, impact of trauma and recovery. The study assumed that the trafficking experience constituted traumatic event, but the impact of this trauma would be variable, depending on various factors. We shall begin the discussion of our findings from the level of this trauma and its impact, recovery and rehabilitation needs and then trace vulnerabilities and phase of transportation backwards from there.

### Constructing the traumatic

Trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions in which the individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed and the individual experiences (either objectively or subjectively) a threat to his/her life, bodily integrity, or that of a caregiver or family (Saakvitne, Gamble, Pearlman, & Tabor Lev, 2000). Therefore the impact of an event is the anchor used to define the harmfulness of the event.

In the present study the event or events that were coded under the theme of exploitation shed some light on the traumatic events that trafficked girls may be subjected to. It is important to bear in mind that not all trafficking cases involve extreme abuse and not all trafficked persons experience profound post-trauma reaction (Zimmerman, Oram, Borland, & Watts, 2009). Therefore though current literature is primarily based on reports of extreme cases of trafficking, with increase in disclosure, less severe cases will also be reported and service providers need to adapt to this

variation in levels of needs of the trafficked person. However, no prior assessment was made to choose cases of higher or lower trauma for the present sample.

1. **QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES**

*Table 3: Results from questionnaires by subcategories*

| Questionnaire | Sub-category | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| SRQ-20 | | 9,15 | 4,25 |
| IES-R | *Intrusion* | 1,96 | 1,22 |
| | *Avoidance* | 1,94 | 0,75 |
| | *Hyperarousal* | 2 | 1,08 |
| MSPSS | *Significant others* | 17 | 7,25 |
| | *Family* | 13,6 | 8,09 |
| | *Friends* | 15,1 | 6,16 |
| Rosenberg self-esteem scale | | 18 | 5,1 |
| WHOQOL-BREF | *Physical health* | 23,31 | 4,91 |
| | *Psychological* | 16,92 | 4,03 |
| | *Social relationships* | 8,31 | 1,97 |
| | *Environment* | 21 | 5,67 |

**MENTAL HEALTH STATUS**

Using the **SRQ-20** for screening mental disorders, the research found that psychological distress affects most of the respondents. The total mean score for SRQ-20 was 9.08 (SD=4.29). The three participants from Nepal and two from Bangladesh who had returned home scored less than total mean score contrary to all other participants who scored above the total mean score. As shown in table 4, a majority of participants complained about headache, sleeping disorders, difficulties to concentrate and sadness. Amal, Siyana and Sairah living in shelter home, Jamila in RLA and Pori and Ranu living in Bangladesh with their families, reported suicidal thoughts. Overall results from SRQ-20 seemed to indicate a higher prevalence of symptoms also encountered in depression among this sample. Sairah reported highest score of 13, while Sapana reported lowest score of 1.

_Table 4:_ _Results from SRQ20_

|  | N=1 3 |
|---|---|
| Do you often have headache? | 11 |
| Do you have uncomfortable feeling in your stomach? | 7 |
| Is your digestion poor? | 7 |
| Is your appetite poor? | 8 |
| Are you easily tired? | 4 |
| Do you feel tired all the time? | 4 |
| Do you sleep badly? | 9 |
| Do your hands shake? | 4 |
| Are you easily frightened? | 6 |
| Do you find it difficult to make decisions? | 6 |
| Is your daily work suffering? | 1 |
| Do you have trouble thinking clearly? | 9 |
| Do you find it difficult to enjoy your daily activities? | 4 |
| Do you cry more than usual? | 8 |
| Do you feel unhappy? | 9 |
| Do you feel nervous, tense, worried? | 5 |
| Do you feel you are a worthless person? | 5 |
| Are you unable to play a useful part in life? | 1 |
| Has the thought of ending your life been in your mind? | 6 |
| Have you lost interest in things? | 4 |

## LEVELS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

The results from the **IES-R** showed a total mean score of 43 (SD=19,83), with 7 participants scoring above this score – 2 in shelter home, 3 in Bangladesh and 2 in RLA). Our findings showed that Jamila and Rahini had reported highest levels of PTSD, while Upasana, Reshma and Sapana reported lowest levels of PTSD. Participants from Bangladesh reports the same level of PTSD score irrespective of their life context, but the distribution is symptoms is different. As shown in table 5, the highest intensity score was the mean hyperarousal score (mean=2, SD=1,07) which corresponded to an increase of anxiety and emotional arousal such as irritability, sleeping disorders, difficulty in concentrating, hypervigilance, easily startled and reminders of traumatic experiences that provoke physical reactions (sweating, nausea).

Following this was intrusion mean score of 1.96 (SD=1.22) which corresponded to feeling distress when reminded of the trauma, intrusive thoughts, flashbacks from the scene and nightmares. The lowest score was the avoidance score with a mean of 1.94 (SD=0.72): avoiding feelings, thoughts and conversation that remind of the trauma. Individually, except for Sapana from Nepal, all participants presented some symptoms of psychological distress related to traumatic event Upasana, Reshma and Ranu had mean scores under 5. With regards to their recovery process, the higher the intensity and frequency of the symptomatology, the slower their recovery process would be. Among all symptoms, symptoms of avoidance tend to last longer than other symptoms. We can assume that the recovery process will therefore take more time for those people.

_Table 5: Repartition of symptoms of PTSD according to participants' life context_

|  | Shelter home | RLA | Nepal | Bangladesh | Total mean score | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intrusion | 1,84 | 3,69 | 0,75 | 2,13 | 1,96 | *1,22* |
| Avoidance | 2,44 | 1,81 | 0,96 | 2,25 | 1,94 | *0,75* |
| Hyperarousal | 2,54 | 2,75 | 0,50 | 2,13 | 2 | *1,08* |
| Total | 6,82 | 8,25 | 2,21 | 6,50 | 5,9 | *2,73* |

PTSD is generally associated with other psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety. When comparing the results from both questionnaires – SRQ-20 and IES-R -, we also found that 7 participants present a high score in both questionnaires and 2 have a low score in both questionnaires. We could speculate that this finding reflected the impact of untreated trauma. Qualitative discussion following this section would shed more light on differences in life trajectories of these groups that was contributing to this trend.

## SELF-ESTEEM

According to the results obtained by the **Rosenberg self-esteem scale**, the total mean score for self-esteem was 18 (SD=5.1). 12 participants scored equal or above 15 (the cut-off), which indicated that their perception of self-esteem was moderate to high. The mean score (mean= 17.6; SD=5.06) for the participants from Bangladesh was below the mean level in Bangladesh (mean=27.8; SD=5.20) (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). Among them, Amal presented a score lower than 15, Pori, Ranu, Mou and Dipti presented a score between 15 and 17 and Sabiran and Smriti presented a score above 17 considered as a higher level of self-esteem.  The mean score for Upasana, Reshma and Sapana (mean=21; SD=1) was higher than the one from the Bangladeshi. In comparison, a Nepalese study (Yamaguchi, Poudel & Jimba, 2013) on level of self-esteem in 115 adolescents from the general population found a mean score of 22,8 (SD=4,7) which was almost similar to the mean of the present study.

## LEVELS OF RECOVERY

The **Mental Health Recovery Star** showed that 9 participants – 2 in shelter home, 2 in RLA, 2 who have returned home and the 3 Nepalese - had reached the highest stage of the ladder 'of self-reliance' in one or more domains (up to 5). Without any support focusing on mental health, some participants had already managed to reach the stage of 'self-reliance', which showed their good capacity to cope with daily life. Except two participants in Bangladesh, 11 had reached the learning stage in one or more domains. A majority of participants answered they were learning about relationships. All participants had reached the 'believing stage' in one domain at least – mostly 'physical health and self-care'. That meant they had started to believe in changes and to take responsibilities in caring for themselves. Lastly, 9 of them had reached the ladder 'accepting help in 1 to 4 domains, which meant they consider they needed help in some areas of  their life such as 'managing mental health' which was selected by 7 participants. 4 participants feel stuck in one area of their life out of which 3 of them mention the social network, which meant they feel isolated.

*Table 6: Results from Recovery Star by number of people who have reached the stages*

| Stages | Shelter home N=4 | RLA N=2 | Nepal N=3 | Bangladesh N=4 | N=13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-reliance | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 9 |
| Learning | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| Believing | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 13 |
| Accepting help | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 9 |
| Stuck | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 |

There were strong variances between people and between stages. The highest mean score was reached for 'responsibilities' with most participants having reached the 'believing' stage. For 'self-esteem and identity', most participants had reached the self-reliance stage. Then came 'living skills' for which most participants had reached the 'believing' stage. Most participants had reached the 'learning' stage for 'work' and 'relationships'.

'Physical health and self-care', social networks and managing mental health came last which signified that participants were having mostly difficulties in these domains. As a result, they needed help to manage their physical and mental health. Due to the small number of responses, the 'Addictive behaviours' were not considered in the results.

*Table 7*: *Results from Recovery Star by mean score per ladder reached*

| Domain | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Responsibilities | 7,2 | 2,41 |
| Self-esteem and identity | 7,1 | 2,22 |
| Living skills | 6,5 | 2,44 |
| Work | 6,4 | 2,06 |
| Relationships | 6,4 | 1,85 |
| Trust and hope | 6,2 | 2,86 |
| Physical health and self-care | 5,5 | 2,63 |
| Social networks | 5,2 | 2,54 |
| Managing mental health | 5,0 | 2,45 |

## PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

The mean total perceived social support was 67.52 (SD=13.12). The highest mean score was found among the 3 Nepalese participants and 4 Bangladeshi (Amal and Siyana in shelter home and Poi and Mou who had returned home). The higher scores ranged between 71.4 and 84 while the lowest scores ranged from 42 to 65.8. Jamila and Rahini in the RLA, Smriti and Sairah in shelter home and Ranu and Dipti who had returned to their families in Bangladesh were the ones who perceived lower levels of social support. Throughout the sessions, they mentioned isolation, distrust and lack of family support.

The highest mean sub-inventory score was found for *Significant others* with 25.5 (SD=6.6) and this was the main social support for Amal, Siyana and Smriti in shelter home, Upasana, Reshma and Sapana integrated in a community separate from their families in Nepal and Mou and Dipti who had returned to their families in Bangladesh.

When studying the perceived social support, we found that some answers given for *Significant others* referred to family members. The wording 'a special person' had not been explicitly defined. Therefore, a special person was either someone from the family or from the friend circle. The mean *Friends* sub- inventory score was 21.1 (SD=5.98) and Reshma (living in Nepal) and Amal (living in shelter home) relied strongly on friends.

The lowest mean score was found on *Family* sub-inventory score which was 20.9 (SD=9.21). However since it emerged during the interviews that the participants may have considered someone from their family while marking their responses on 'significant others', it is difficult to differentiate the scores. One could speculate that while marking their responses for family, they might have thought of the extended family.

## THE QUALITY OF LIFE

The quality of life assessed with the **WHOQOL-BREF** showed a total mean score of 69.54 (SD=13.84). The total mean score for Bangladeshi (mean=66.1; SD=13.84) is lower than the one from Nepali participants (mean=81; SD=7). It was also lower than the total mean score of general population in Bangladesh found in other studies (Tsutsumi et al., 2007) (Izutsu et al., 2006). Dipti, Ranu and Sapana had the highest score, while Amal, Siyana and Smriti showed the lowest scores.

The perception of quality of life was the highest for 'Physical health' (mean=23,31; SD=4,91) and the 'environment' (mean=21; SD=5,67) domains, which indicated that participants were less affected in those two areas of life than for 'psychological' domain (mean=16,92; SD=4,03) and the 'social relationships' which scored the lowest (mean=8,31; SD=1,97).

On the whole, participants were satisfied with their physical capacity to deal with daily activities, they felt safe and they were satisfied with health services provided to them. At the other end, they were satisfied with their social relationships but not with the support from their friends. Additionally, their psychological distress diminished the positive level of self-image.

*Table 8: Results for WHOQOL-BREF by living conditions*

| Domains | Shelter home N=4 Mean *(SD)* | RL A N=2 | Nepal N=3 Mean *(SD)* | Banglade sh N=4 Mean *(SD)* | Tota l N=1 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical health | 19,75 *(4,5)* | 23 (4,95) | 26,67 | 24,50 | 23,31 (4,91) |
| Psychological | 14 *(4,97)* | 14,5 (0) | 18,67 | 19,75 | 16,92 (4,03) |
| Social | 7,5 *(0,58)* | 6,5 (0,71) | 9,33 (0,58) | 9,25 (2,87) | 8,31 (1,97) |
| Environment | 16,5 (5,45) | 18,5 | 26,33 | 22,75 | 21 (5,67) |
| Total | 57,75 (14,72) | 62,5 *(9,9)* | 81 (6,02) | 76,25 (9,71) | 69,54 (13,84) |

## GENERAL INDICATORS FROM QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Out of the four contexts of living, that is between girls who were in shelter home, those who were in RLA, those who were living independently and those who had returned to their families, one group emerged to have higher levels of resilience indicated by lower psychological distress scores and higher recovery scores.

Upasana, Reshma and Sapana who had been trafficked while they were under 18 years of age and had returned to Nepal, but were living separately from their families, emerged to indicate highest resilience, indicated by their lower levels of psychological distress and higher levels of protective mechanisms such as self-esteem, perception of recovery, quality of life and social support. While discussing the qualitative findings, we shall try to identify processes that could be contributing to this resilience.

The rest of the participants showed a mixed level of distress and recovery. Amal living in shelter home, Jamila living in RLA and Pori living with her family in Bangladesh, had high scores on both SRQ-20 and IES-R, indicating psychological distress. Comparing their scores on recovery showed some interesting trends.

Amal had lowest levels of self-esteem and quality of life though she had better perception of social support and average levels of perception of recovery. Jamila and Pori had very high levels of self-esteem and quality of life. While Jamila perceived lower social support, Pori who had returned to her family in Bangladesh reported high levels of social support. On the other hand Jamila reported better perception of her own recovery, living independently and working in RLA, while Pori indicated average levels of recovery.

Apparently all three contexts indicated certain amount of protective factors and certain levels of vulnerabilities. The nuances explaining why Amal had such low self-esteem and poor quality of life, as of now appears to be related to her living in a closed door shelter home, while Jamila and Pori both were living in the community. The disparity between Jamila's actual scores on psychosocial distress and her perception of recovery showed a disconnect between how she was and how she wanted to be. Therefore, though it appeared that living out of bondage yet working in RLA in her own terms may have contributed to Jamila's self-esteem and perception of recovery, her distress remained untreated indicating a fragile and vulnerable person within an apparently well-adjusted woman. Pori on the other hand was experiencing social support, high self-esteem and yet had clear indications of difficulties adjusting with daily life her due to high level of psychological distress related to past trauma and stress. Her perception of recovery indicated her struggle with mental health.

Amidst a mix of positive and negative findings, it appeared that the girls who had returned to Nepal were the most well-adjusted and on a path of recovery. What set them apart from the others? What caused Amal to experience such poor quality of life in a shelter home, while Sairah who lived in the same context did not? Answers to these questions and a richer understanding of the lives of the 13 participants follows with the qualitative analysis of their in-depth interviews.

## 2. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The qualitative analysis was performed from data collected during the semi-structured interview and pictorial methods. The plan of the analysis follow the plan of the sessions: from childhood till today. In order to facilitate the reading, key findings are presented at the end of each sub-chapter.

## DATA AND INFORMATION ABOUT PRIMARY SYSTEMS

*Table 9: Descriptive characteristics of the family situation of the survivor prior to trafficking*

|  |  | **N=13** |
|---|---|---|
| Family structure | *Departure of father* | 3 |
|  | *Departure of mother* | 1 |
|  | *Departure of both parents* | 3 |
|  | *Death of father* | 1 |
|  | *Death of mother* | 0 |
|  | *Death of both parents* | 2 |
| Violence, abuse and neglect | *Violence at home* | 7 |
|  | *Neglect and abuse during childhood* | 5 |
|  | *Abandonment at home* | 7 |
|  | *Child labour during childhood* | 6 |
|  | *Escape from home as a child/adolescent* | 4 |
| Social status | *Lived in poverty* | 8 |

### Precursory events during childhood Method of Exit

Childhood is a period which is mostly expected to be experienced positively. It is a period marked by influences of family school, friends, play and freedom to do as one pleases with minimum responsibilities. On the other hand, some childhoods are not so kindred. They are marked by harsh living conditions. In such cases the experience of childhood is affected by family neglect more than lack of financial resources itself. Dropping out from school, working as a child to support the family, witnessing the mother's anxiety and depression are some examples of situations they have been through during their childhood. Even though, it is not expressively mentioned by participants, it is highly likely that the accumulation of neglect throughout the years has deteriorated the relationship between the child and her family. In that context, the will to leave the family nest for a better life or

the necessity to leave home to escape financial crisis – as participants mentioned it - may have created opportunities for meeting with potential traffickers.

Regarding the process of exit, we observe that some victims may have left home without any involvement or knowledge of parents or other family members, while in case of some girls, family members knew about their leaving home. Leaving home at early age (1 participant from Nepal was 12 years when she left home voluntarily), following other people without the consent of an adult, having the consent of an adult who is not aware of trafficking are other ways marking a girl's exit. There are several factors that prepare the grounds for the exit. Separation from a safe environment, early ending of education (at grade 5th), child labour (4 participants from Bangladesh and 2 from Nepal) are some of the situations that may increase vulnerabilities, create opportunities and lead to deciding for self. It is therefore crucial to understand what conditions are required to exit home.

## Conditions preceding a girl's exit/pre-existing conditions

Unevenly, some major events (death, abandonment) or conditions (neglect, poverty) may have created vulnerabilities among families and raised the level of risks for girls to leave their home without adequate precaution or protection. However, the events in themselves may not singularly create vulnerability without the intersection with other factors as the data from this research shows.

> Reshma's (21 years old, Nepal) family became poor after her father sold their property. They had no land and they could not afford school fees for her. In order to financially support the family, Reshma was sent to Kathmandu for work: '*The trouble began when my mother sent me to Kathmandu to work as a domestic labour with my maternal uncle. At that time, I was 10/11 years old. I worked there about up to 13/14 years old. One day, my mother told me that I was grown up and it was not suitable to work as a domestic worker. After that mother called me at home, I also worked around 2 years as wage labourer. After sometime, my maternal uncle brought me to Kathmandu as worker to make garland in Buddha temple by saying that it was a light work. We were poor and my earning was too little (that was only sufficient for oil and spices)'.* One day, a trafficker approached Reshma's mother: '*One of the villagers told my mother that foreign employment helped to earn more and suggested my mother to send me to a foreign country to earn more. One day, my mother and her friend called me to meet my grandmother by saying that she was sick. Then I went to my home but my grandmother was not sick. My mother and her friend (trafficker) told me that such a little money was not enough and I should go to foreign country to earn. The trafficker told that his daughter was also going along with us. And all expenses would be borne by him but I was taken to India and sold there.* Reshma never thought she would leave Nepal. But the precarious situation of her family made them vulnerable to trafficking. The trafficker convinced Reshma that his daughter would go along with them. He built the trust and she agreed to leave with him.

### 1. Family environment – broken families, lack of support

In order to understand the decision making process for leaving home, it is important to get a picture of the survivor's family and the way she views them. Compared to the participants from Bangladesh, the Nepalese participants reported more number of family members during the Family Tree exercise that was done to understand her position in her family. The family structure for girls from Nepal included more than biological parents, and it included grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins – what may be often termed as extended family. Notwithstanding the support they could find within their family, it did not seem to be efficient enough in preventing them from risk laden migration.

In 7 families (6 from Bangladesh and 1 from Nepal) out of 13, either the father or the mother or both left home in different circumstances. Common reasons accounting for absence of either father or mother were: a second or another marriage, domestic violence and birth of a girl child. In those situations, a second marriage led to financial crisis, especially in the absence of community norms or enforced legal measures to provide for alimony or child support. When the father left, the mother became obliged to play the omnipotent role of that of a nurturer, provider and protector in an emerging context where other family members did not seem to be compensating for absence of a father. As a consequence, sometimes children were also forced to drop out from school to work to support the family. In cases where children kept contact with their father, the link became distant with time due to hostility with the second wife – mostly because of economic issues.

The separation with the mother who deliberately left home because of economic reasons, second marriage or domestic violence occurred with 4 participants. Mothers of Amal and Siyana have re-married and they were brought up by their grandmothers, the mother of Dipti left her with 'her aunt'– she does not know the reason; Ranu's mother left because of domestic violence and Ranu stayed with her father.

For 3 other participants from Bangladesh, their father died in their childhood and they all described a strong attachment to their mother. Mou lost her father when she was 6/7 years old. Mou's mother became head of family and married off Mou soon after: *'My mother has done so much for us. When my father died I did not understand much as my mother was there to take care of us. You can overcome if any other relative passes away but when the parents die one loses everything'.* Mou expressed her gratitude towards her mother who had been able to compensate for the absence of her father. Her mother supported Mou's divorce after the husband asked Mou to go to India – we do not know whether he intended to traffic her.

For 2 participants in Red Light Area, their mothers died before they were trafficked – and their fathers had already passed away. For Jamila, the death of her mother was a critical event as she was in India and she could not go to her funeral at that time. Afterwards, she decided not to go back to Bangladesh: *'because there was no one there for her anymore'.*

> Rahini (45 years old, Bangladesh) lost both her parents as a child: she never knew her father and her mother died when she was 12 years old. She sees herself as a child orphan, without any protection, who found her destiny in exploitation: *'Because my fate/destiny is*

*cursed, dear… because I was born poor and I didn't have parents as a child… you see, when you are poor and have nothing, you feel and experience orphan hood, with no one to care for and protect you. You feel that your fate is cursed and such exploitation becomes your life… do you understand what I mean?*' Rahini has experienced the absence of care and the need for protection as a child. Soon after the death of her mother, she got married and bore 3 children. She was satisfied with her life till her husband decided to marry another woman without her consent. Feeling of betrayal, anger and probably abandonment made her leave for India.

The story of Pori (27 years old, Bangladesh) is quite representative of negative impact of broken families and its indirect link with trafficking. Pori was trafficked by her husband when she was 24 years old. During her childhood, some events affected her in a way that slowly led her to marry a man who turned out to be a trafficker. Due to poverty, Pori's family left their homeland and moved to the nearest biggest town when she was still a child. They moved from a comfortable life to a life with struggles. Four years later, Pori's father got married a second time and left the family financially, socially and psychologically insecure: '*When he got married I was 16 years old and we didn't know that he got married but learnt it later on. It was a tremendous shock for me and my entire family. I remember we were crying and crying and scared of what will happen to us as my father will not love us the way he used to and will share everything with his second family. We felt helpless and hopeless. My mother was also crying, she was crying so much like someone died in the family'.* That event was the second breaking point in Pori's life*: 'My father's second marriage. It ruined our life, our well organized family, everything'.* The same year she was married against her will. Nonetheless she managed to build a good relationship with her husband till they divorced. A second marriage devastated her life and she ended up in trafficking. She still considers her father's remarriage as a breaking point and ultimately blamed him for ruining her life.

Pori's case exemplifies the impact of insecurities that develop in childhood and leave a mark all through a person's life. Though apparently her father's second marriage while she was a child was far removed from her subsequent trafficking when she was a young adult, in her mind it was the event that changed everything for her. Therefore what this case also shows is that trafficking may occur at a later point in time, but vulnerabilities that determine one's trajectory towards being trafficked begin much before. Identifying such vulnerabilities auguring trafficking, can therefore be immensely useful in prevention.

Also the family structure and dynamics altered with the leaving or absence of parents – not permanently present physically and/or psychologically and not completely absent either – which seemed to be one of the predominant family pattern. When one or both parents were absent, there was another maternal and/or paternal figure who substituted the missing parent and took on the responsibility to raise, educate the child: a grand-mother, a brother or an aunt. In those situations, respondents described a separation process or the mourning process due to absence of father and/or mother, which was obstructed as it was not psychologically worked through.

Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) was separated at young age from both her parents who re- married and went away. Consequently, she was raised by her grandmother: *'when I was very young, about five years old, my father left my mother. I was an only child, he left my mother and re- married. Then my uncles said that you cannot stay here and then my mother brought me to my maternal grandmother's house. Though my mother was hoping that my father would come back, but he did not. After she came there, she put me in school. I studied up to class VII. But I would feel bad every time somebody asked 'where was your father', I would feel terrible [starts weeping, Ed.]. Everyone had everything, except me.* She suffered from social stigma due to the absence of her father and her mother financially supported her: '*My mother had to work in other people's houses to look after me. I used to feel bad that she had to work for me – I used to feel frustrated that I should grow up like a boy and earn a livelihood and look after her. That is when I gave up studying – I went to Dhaka'.* Interestingly, Siyana's mother was not living with her and Siyana worked without her mother's knowledge. When she was 16 years old, her grandmother married her with one of her brother. But what Siyana wanted was to live close to her mother and she left to Dhaka. After facing her mother's indifference towards her she decided to go to India to look for her father. In her case, separation from both parents led her to a quest for care, attention and love. She put all her energy in reaching her objective.

Abandonment by a parent or the absence of a parent may not necessarily create a structural void – that is someone else takes on functional responsibilities of parenting. But, it causes distress in the child and that, if the family does not have adequate emotional infrastructure to enable children to grieve and mourn the absence, the abandonment or the loss, it creates a sense of orphan hood in children, and the child is left to his or her devices to cope with it. Over time, the messages that the child internalises could be: *'I am my only resource, and I must deal with this distress on my own'*. This loss of safety, protection lessens the child's ability to depend on her primary system (the family) and may create counter-dependence, wherein the child depends on herself alone for further decision making, or the child may internalise victimhood, blaming herself for her sadness.

When Mou (22 years old, from Bangladesh) was 6 years old her father died: *'When my father died, our mother worked hard to raise us. Then I had a better life but yet, there is sadness…'* Later on she added: *'I used to play, do my work but yet always had a sad feeling in me, never shared it with anyone. Who will I share my pain with? I never expressed my pain and never shared about my suffering with anyone. If I did not get the food for one meal I never complained or asked someone for it. I never asked for any help from any one'.* The sadness Mou described sounds like a depressive mood that may have prevented her from taking control over her life. When she was married Mou suffered in silence till her mother brought her back; when she was trafficked Mou waited for a raid to happen and she did not try to escape. Difficulties to make decision for her own good have kept her in adjusting to recurring aversive situations.

Broken families are not necessarily a singular cause for trafficking, but children from those families may be more vulnerable because of added economic, social and psychological vulnerability, that could make them targets for traffickers. Some of the social conditions that seem to be common for survivors from families in distress were:

1. Being financially dependent on the husband - according to survivor's own situations or their mother's prior to trafficking, women from Bangladesh were financially dependent on their husbands. In Nepal, women seemed to have independent earning opportunities, even in rural areas.

2. Polygamy resulted in income insecurity amongst women, and the burden of earning passed onto children. According to the respondents' experience, there was not enough financial support in terms of alimony or child support either in Bangladesh or Nepal.

3. A lack of support from family and community in caregiving for children or women who have been abandoned by their husbands, as expected in a traditional patriarchal set up.

4. Children working to support themselves and their families in the absence of any financial support. Almost half of the respondents were in employment locally, prior to being trafficked.

5. Migration for employment meant higher wages or perceived greater opportunities for employment or higher wages. Under such conditions, offers of children's education being taken care of, or their living expenses being met through employment or by a host family upon migration became a value proposition for families in distress.

Deprivation, neglect and psychological orphan hood was common to children regardless of their poverty situation, provoking separation from family without evoking anxiety. Besides, within participants' families, violence appeared in different forms more or less visible, more or less identified, more or less intense. Either during childhood or during the marriage, situations of violence within the family was relatively common. That created multiple layers of vulnerabilities to be dealt with.

The vulnerability may be explained with the metaphor of an iceberg, with a visible top – what can be observed – and the invisible down – what cannot be observed, recognized, and eventually not considered. Domestic violence, abandonment of children by their parents, financial insecurity and poverty, children dropping out of schools and put into labour were observable indicators of vulnerability. Added to this, there is an underlying part which is accepted violence on condition of social tolerance/impunity of violence. Even deeper are those forms of violence where even the victim does not realize it is violence. For example, failed dependency, lack of emotional nurture, lack of safety, intimacy are forms of violence for which the victims will not even be aware of violation of her rights. Moreover, at systemic levels, there are underlying factors that constitute vulnerability that may not be 'visible' or discernible. These include an absent social welfare system for children and women who are victims of domestic violence, an absent law enforcement mechanism to ensure financial security of children and women who are victims of polygamy, social conditions that are hostile to women's employment in the workforce, etc.

Vulnerabilities are present at individual, family and community levels.

Besides neglect by abandonment, frequency and occurrence of psychological abuse was high among participants' narratives. Different kind of abuses, from different members of the family may have led to devastating and irreversible consequences on a child's life. Abusive situations create humiliation, feeling of helplessness, confusion, and psychological distress. The sequelae of the psychological abuse was difficult to assess but at this stage we can hypothesize a link between the psychological consequences of abusive situations and the will to take risks in one's life – even unconsciously.

Family violence was unfortunately quite common among participants' families and probably underreported by participants. More than the violence itself, participants described the attitude of their parents, the consequences of violence on their parents' relationships and the consequences on their own lives.

### Neglect due to abandonment, weak parenting and poverty

> Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) suffered a lot during her childhood. Between an absent father and a mother who used to beat her up, she grew up in a family which did not offer the attention and love she would expect. She dropped out from school when she was 9 years old and started to work - in fields and as housemaid. When she was 18 years old, Sairah decided to leave: '*I left because my mother was working in other people's houses and then she was burdened'* and then she explained: *'I thought if I earned some money then people would love me and behave well with me. And I have seen this also that whoever I want from my heart, that person never becomes mine'.* In Sairah's mind, earning money meant respect, attention, and attachment. Her decision to leave was clearly related to her need for attention from her mother. But when her mother tried to protect her, Sairah did not listen to her which could be a representation of betrayal by an attachment figure which leaves one's ability to accept love and protection fractured.

In the case of abandonment by both parents (4 participants), the child may leave with the hope to find her parent, to retrieve the lost love of the parent back. The desire and need for love and care is then stronger than the danger from the unknown journey. Alternatively, the hope and fantasy that the absent parent/s would look for her, once she leaves home could also be motivating such risk taking behaviour. It was almost like a test of her parents' love for her, seeking some form of affirmation by creating a situation that placed her in the centre. That would be the sign she is loved and cared for.

> Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh) left home after one more argument with her mother who garnered the help of a neighbour to beat up Dipti. After 7 months in exploitation, she escaped and her mother came to India to meet her in the shelter home where she was staying. She was happily surprised: *'And I could not believe my own ears as I thought my mother would have never come to take me back. When I first saw her I could not believe that she really went to bring me back and we both burst in to tears when we saw each other'.* For Dipti, it was the first and only time her mother showed her the love and attention she was craving for.

Neglect can also be in the form of weak parenting. Inability to ensure the child receives education and doesn't have to abandon it for various reasons can be treated as an indication of weak parenting. The average level of education reported was till grade VI (SD=3.16). It ranged from level 0 to level 12. In some situations the child was prevented from going to school (2 participants), while in other situations, the child could not pursue studies (due to financial constraints), or she may have decide to not go to school. There were several reasons ranging from lack of interest in studies, boredom, lack of concentration or distraction due to disturbing context in the family, neglect and lack of support from teachers and the family to address her lack of interest in going to school.

> When she was about 11 years old, Sapana (20 years old, Nepal) dropped out from school because she was not interested in studying. Despite her mother wishing for her to go to school, she engaged in household chores and agriculture work. She worked and earned money. In order to avoid getting married she left for Kathmandu with some friends when she was 13 years old. She had a dream: *'I did not think any anything. I did not have any fear just I had a dream to wear 'high heal' shoes. I had dream, I would bring money'.* Out of school system and probably influenced by older girls – her friends with whom she left to Kathmandu were 20 years old – Sapana blamed herself for the consequences.

Poverty is often considered as one of the primary causes for trafficking. But more than poverty, the image of parents not being able to fulfil the needs of their family was stronger than the poverty itself in the decision making process. It is this perception of being alone and not having anyone to turn to that differentiates between girls who were poor yet loved and cared for and girls who were poor and abandoned and hence that much closer to being trafficked.

> Amal (20 years old, Bangladesh) decided to leave to India when she was 18 years old. Her decision does not rely only on poverty but also on lack of affection, family roles and responsibilities: *'I have had a lot of hardship in my life, a lot. Ate in the morning, then there was no food throughout the day. My grandmother would try hard, but how would she do it? I came here due to a lot of hardship. I came here thinking that I would come here to do something, while she was alive. I did not even tell her that I was coming here. After I left, she cried a lot. She has been looking after me from when I was very young. Never received affection from parents, only her. No one comes to Mumbai in a fanciful way, people come here out of compulsions. No one wants to spoil their lives, showing their "izzat" [means both honour and genetalia, Ed] to someone else. Does anyone want? My grandmother wanted me to marry? Why did I not marry? I wanted to look after her and my two younger siblings. I thought if I married, where will my younger sister go? Where will my younger brother go? Due to some of these thoughts, I never wanted to marry. How long would my grandma be alive? One, two or three or four years? Who would look after us our whole life? I thought about all these and that is why I came here'.*

For half the participants (4 from Bangladesh and 2 from Nepal), neglect led to child labour, begging, stealing where the child learnt how to survive by herself. Earning was either encouraged by the family, or unknown.

In some families the child was abandoned within the family itself: nobody cared about her, no attention was paid to what she was doing, it appeared that she was left to raise herself and at times others.

> When she was a child (8/9 years old), Rahini (45 years old, Bangladesh) took care of her mother and her sister – her father was dead and they needed some help; she would beg instead of going to school to feed them: *'I used to leave home for school and instead of going to the school, I used to go off to beg so that I could still carry some food home for my mother and me and my sister. So I had started begging much earlier before my mother died…and after her death I continued that.'* As a consequence, Rahini was exposed to hardship and she lived through survival for her and her siblings. She has probably developed some skills that helped her to face other difficulties in her life: *'I have started struggling from a very young age… I am not scared of any struggle anymore… I have learnt it the hard way and I will never fail ever… I have learnt to fight as a young girl and have continued'.* Nonetheless, her life seems like a repetition of harsh situations: from struggle in childhood to struggle in adulthood.

Therefore what emerges is that poverty induced by abandonment or absence of parents, forced children to take parental roles and responsibilities. This leads to an informal foster care in some cases. Such care provided by grandparents or other guardians does not compensate the fiancial or psychological or social insecurity. What is common for all participants is that in the absence of financial security in primary family system, there is nothing to fall back on. Or in other words there are no social welfare or child care services that can secure their primary needs or education. This leads to a child taking on a parental role. In doing so many girls developed an attachment, sense of responsibility and motivation. The vulnerability existed in the sense of desperation to earn money and take care of such attachment figures at an age when she would not be allowed to work or migrate legally. This leaves her with no choices but to take risks in order to fulfil her desires that give meaning to her life.

## Violence and abuse

More than half of the participants (7 from Bangladesh and 1 from Nepal) reported physical violence at home during their childhood: being beaten up by a father, a mother and other siblings was quite common for them.

> Besides other member of her family, Ranu (24 years old, Bangladesh) was victim of violence by her father: *'Yes he also beat us whenever he got the chance. We tried to escape and hid in other people's house but he also dragged us from our hiding place and then continued to beat. He used to say that I earn for the family so everyone must listen to what I say. He was not very smart'.* They did not get any support from anyone. Till she went to Dhaka to her uncle's home, Ranu took care of her father and her siblings while her mother was away protecting herself from her husband's violence: *'She left before the Eid day. She didn't take any of us. She used to do this when my father beat her. My father still beats her. It was so painful even to remember and it is still very painful for me. I wish I could*

*find a good job so that I can keep my mother with me and take her away from all this. I feel so so bad'.* Adopting the role of her mother in her absence, Ranu sees herself as a rescuer. For her, the victim is her mother.

The importance of attachment and role of family in creating resilient individuals is well documented. Therefore absence of the family or primary system in fulfilling its role of protecting, nurturing and giving a child a sense of identity in the case of survivors highlights the same point. When the primary system fails to provide a blanket of security for the child it leads to 'failed dependency' – an inability to form trusting relationships with an authority figure. Maltreated children grow up with emotional and behavioural problems if the situation remains ignored (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013). Such children have difficulty in expressing their feelings and may develop depression and anxiety as adults. They are malleable and thus become vulnerable to manipulation by people who offer support and friendship. It is also possible that children who take on adult roles, end up taking more risks in order to gain some appreciation and love.

However not all children who are abused and neglected go on to take risks and fall prey to trafficking. The impact is moderated by other factors such as the child's own resilience, support from others, community's role.

As it is becoming apparent girls who survived trafficking were not unknown to adversities in their families and communities. Since we had data from girls who were trafficked after being married, the next section explores vulnerabilities in the marital family that pave the way to risk taking.

## 3. Vulnerabilities reinforced during marriage

Marital status and marital life seemed to predetermine a certain level of vulnerability. Because of violence by husband and family in-law, girls eventually divorced and returned to their parents' home. Later on, the uncomfortable situation of financially depending on their family or the opportunity to marry again led them to leave her home environment. Among the 13 participants, 2 were married and 5 were divorced at time of trafficking, all from Bangladesh.

6 participants had at least one child, all in their adolescence. For all of them, marriage was also an experience of early marriage which happened between 2 and 16 years old (mean=13.14; SD=5.15). In different circumstances, young girls were married before their age of maturity. As example, Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) was forcefully married to her grand-mother's brother when she was 16 years old. In all cases, the decision to leave home was an indication of domestic stress.

Then during marriage, their situations worsened: lack of attachment with husband, presence of physical, psychological and sexual violence, abandonment in marital home, and harassment by other member of the family as she increasingly becomes an object on which violence can be used.

Restrictions on mobility and confinement, violence from different members of the husband's family, social isolation, food deprivation were some of the abuses encountered by the participants in their marital homes. Systematic control was used by families of the groom, often to coerce the young women to a psychological state of submission in which, they were too afraid to challenge or seek

help to challenge the violence.

Humiliation and neglect, threats and financial blackmail left victims in a state where they were no longer able to protect themselves. Mostly because of domestic violence, 5 participants got divorced, came back to live with their (natal) families and became a potential target for trafficking by their husband or by another person after returning home.

> Pori (27 years old, Bangladesh) married a second time to a man who was violent and abusive. For the sake of having a happy family, she endured domestic violence from her husband and her in- laws. *'He sometimes physically abused me and had illicit affair with other girls too. If I said anything then he would beat me again. Then my second daughter was born and nine months afterwards my mother in law started to bother me again and she was not happy that I gave birth to a girl child. She wanted to get rid of me and my child. Actually she never wanted to have me in the family but she had to do it to save her son. They started to physically abuse me and disturb me in every way they could. They took away whatever asset I had, jewellery given by my previous husband and other valuable things I had from my family. He borrowed 10 thousand taka from me telling me that he would invest that in a business and will give me the money back with profit. My brothers scolded me about this and said that I shouldn't be giving away everything and keep some for my daughter as a gift from her father but it was of no use. He forcefully or deceitfully took everything I had. I had no choice and thought about committing suicide but my concern about my daughters held me back. I wanted a happy life, a caring father, but see what has happened to me. Because of me my family's honour was ruined, my relatives were suffering, all these thoughts made me feel so bad and hopeless.* Pori left her husband once and then she came back to him, claiming that she would rather live with him than alone as a mother of two children. After some time he trafficked her to India.

Sexual violence was also reported during marriage. For instance, Jamila (35 years old, Bangladesh) was married when she was two years old to one boy she considered to be her brother (he was 16 years older than her) till he forced her to have sexual intercourse and then she could understand that he was her husband.

The narratives of survivors who were married or had been married shows that in a patriarchal society marriage may be sought for protection and status to reduce the insecurity of a woman in such a community. Marriage therefore played an important role in fostering a certain identity for a girl, even if there was violence and abuse in it. In the case of Pori, marriage was a transition from a life disrupted by her father's abandonment to another life with hope of finding some attachment and financial security. Maybe that is what motivated her to marry a second time, after her first husband left her. The nature of violence that occurs within marriage and the pre-existing vulnerabilities in a girl's natal family set-up consolidate her situation further tipping it towards risky migration. It is like a tower of vulnerabilities that topples over after it reaches an improbable height. Lack of social and legal mechanisms ensuring men perform their traditional role of protector and provider deteriorates the situation further.

### *4. Role of the community*

In this study, we focused on individual and family system but we also considered that the community system should play a crucial role as a security system. As in all agrarian communities, the communities that the participants belonged to, the collective took preference over the individual. We could therefore expect a strong involvement of the community in the decision making process. Surprisingly, the role of the community seems lacking in this process, and the decision making process around migration and sending children for economic opportunities, or in conflict mitigation of domestic violence, seemed to be taken within the primary family unit. In the respondent's experience, neighbours or community leaders did not feature as any source of support in times of deprivation or rescue at times of distress. It is indeterminable at this stage whether this spells a certain context in villages and communities of Nepal and Bangladesh where communities are becoming looser and less involved, or whether this spells neglect of families which are disadvantaged at multiple levels. This could perhaps indicate the lack of overall impact of vigilance systems at community level that NGOs have sought to activate as a prevention strategy.

Adding to the vulnerabilities discussed till now is the community's role in being unable to offer any support or sanction such disruptive parenting. In fact some communities may even tolerate sexual harassment as in the case of Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh). When she was 7/8 years old, one boy attempted to rape her on her way home. She narrates: *'I was scared and although I did not understand what was happening I felt scared and hurt so I stated to scream for help and then the other farmers who were working in the nearest fields came running and they saved me. Everyone knows about this story and the grandfathers in the village still tease me saying: 'would you like to come out in the jute field with me?'*

## ENTRY POINTS TO TRAFFICKING

The trafficking period is usually considered from the moment the person meets with the trafficker. For clarity in presentation of the results, the results presented below address the trafficking period from the meeting with the trafficker to the arrival to the brothel.

**When does trafficking start?** It seems that there are successive events that are not necessarily primarily related to trafficking that creates vulnerabilities and heightens the level of risks taken. In the case of respondents of this research, these situations happened mostly during their childhood. Neglect within the family, getting married at early age, break down within the family, abandonment by one or both parents and weak involvement of the community in supporting families in distress were events that created a milieu suitable for manipulation by a trafficker's lure of a better life. The life that the girls were to leave behind in order to accompany the trafficker in disguise have been shown to consist of very few attachment figures. Therefore, it seems that pre-trafficking adversities predicts the possibility of the girl agreeing to trust an apparently concerned and loving trafficker instead of consulting with someone, since that significant other hardly exists.

## How does trafficking start?

Out of the 13 respondents, Sairah, Siyana, Amal, Jamila and Rahini entered into sex work knowingly. For example, Rahini from Bangladesh left home after her husband married another woman and divorced her and came to India and accepted a man's offer to work as a sex-worker. The other girls who left themselves, also knew what they were getting into and had left home to escape their abusive families (Sairah and Siyana), abandonment by parents (Amal) and uncontrollable events (Jamila). Except for Amal who says she was 18 when she left home, the others were young adults and three (Siyana, Jamila and Rahini) were married.

The girls who were trafficked as children – Reshma (trafficked when she was 14), Upasana (13 years when trafficked), Sapana (13 years when trafficked) and Dipti (14 years when trafficked) all fell prey to traffickers who pretended to help them find jobs, offer education or offer security. Reshma for example, was drugged and smuggled across the border and she realized she had been trafficked when the person accompanying her left her. Upasana on the other hand was promised education and taken to Delhi and realized she had been sold when the person accompanying her left, Dipti tried to escape her mother's violence and took help from a friend who trafficked her instead and Sapna left home to earn money and was sold off in Mumbai. Pori and Mou also were trafficked in similar manner though they were older than 18 years, both were drugged and transported out of Bangladesh. Ranu's case is the only one in which there is a hint of taking approval from another family member (her sister) and being suspicious of the trafficker's motives but still accepting the offer to accompany. In that manner one can say that Ranu too had some awareness of being in danger of being trafficked when she left for Dhaka with her friend.

What emerges is a pattern that distinguishes between girls who are driven out of desperation and exhaustion of coping with their lives marked by deprivation, abuse and lack of affection on one hand and girls who were looking for aspirational goals such as better earning, education and security. The former group seems to have some awareness of the danger that lies ahead, having been exposed to several dangers in their pre-trafficking lives, while the latter were probably more shocked and taken by surprise when they realized they had been sold. Again the former were mostly young adults, while the latter group were primarily children. This implies that trafficking takes on different forms depending on one's pre- trafficking life condition. Traffickers seem to use different strategies for different girls and are adept at analysing the success of their strategy. Therefore, a girl who appears to be escaping a life of danger and abuse, is given an option of sex-work directly as opposed to a girl who appears to be on a journey of aspiration, still unsullied by life's vagaries. Children who get trafficked fall prey to their own innocence and their own excitement of experiencing freedom, autonomy and independence. This doesn't mean they shouldn't be experiencing those feelings that are natural in adolescence but that they were lacking parental support, supervision or even care which made them fall prey to a trafficker's ploy. Their natural developmental urges couldn't find a safe environment in their primary contexts (family and community) and was exploited by a canny trafficker instead.

From the narratives it appears that especially minor survivors had very little recognition of the risk of being trafficked upon leaving home. It seems like they were in denial of suffering and were still holding on to their 'just world belief' – that is their actions will bring rewards in all fairness.

It looked like this that the victimhood being placed on the survivor was not being recognized by her at that point preceding her being trafficked. Her need to carve out a better life in a just world, her restless desire to achieve her dreams or escape her condition created necessary grounds for the trafficker to manipulate her into trusting him/her to be the conduit through which she would eventually achieve what she wanted to.

Her motivations were no different from motivations that spur most people – desire for a better life, for security, money, etc. are not any different from what people who do not get trafficked experience. The difference lies in the outcome of such a journey to achieve aspirations. A survivor's journey takes a different turn due to lack of protective mechanisms both within and outside her.

### Where does trafficking start?

At home within the family? In a familiar environment within the community? At the border between the country of origin and the country of destination? On the way to the place of exploitation? In the Red Light Area? As many questions as many answers: the answer will not only depend on the conditions of trafficking but also on the capacity of the survivor to reflect about her experience during the interview.

*Table 10: Descriptive characteristics of the trafficked girls and women during trafficking: marital status, procurer status and trafficked victim's awareness about trafficking*

| | | N = 13 |
|---|---|---|
| Marital status | *Married* | 3 |
| | *Divorced* | 4 |
| | *Mother of at least 1 child* | 6 |
| Procurer status | *Trafficker is from the family* | 2 |
| | *Trafficker is a friend/acquaintance* | 4 |
| | *Trafficker is a neighbour* | 4 |
| | *Unknown trafficker* | 3 |
| Awareness about trafficking/suspicion/relization that she was being trafficked | *Knew she will cross the border* | 9 |
| | *Understood she was being trafficked before crossing the border* | 3 |
| | *Undestood she was being trafficked after crossing the border* | 4 |
| | *Understood she was being trafficked in the brothel* | 5 |

In table 10, last row presents strong indication that during cross border movement, victims are part of crossing the border illegally. Hence and especially in the case of Bangladeshi girls, they will cooperate with the trafficker and hardly resist being commandeered by the trafficker. At this point while crossing the borders between Bangladesh and India the girl would not ask for help even if she sees the police, out of fear of incarceration on account of being an illegal migrant.

The nature of the relationship with the trafficker is decisive in the trafficking process. In most cases, trafficker was known personally by the survivor or by someone from her family. Though it appears so to the survivor, there is usually more than one person involved in trafficking of each girl. Men or women were involved in trafficking, friends and acquaintances, family members, community members. Any person from the family might turn as a trafficker. 2 participants were trafficked by a family member (including one by her husband); 4 were trafficked by a friend; in 4 cases the trafficker was a neighbour; and 3 participants did not know the trafficker.

In a typical scenario, a trafficker approaches the person (the child, the parent or any significant family member) in a planned manner. Typically, and generically, a man or a woman, familiar through kinship or social networks or newly acquainted to the family of the survivor, or the survivor herself, spends time with them. Then they offer a job in a distant place and they would offer to organize the journey within the country or to India, or to an unknown place (as example for one participant: to Lebanon). With or without the consent of other family members, the child or adolescent, takes the decision to leave her home.

The feeling of betrayal towards this first procurer (the one who initiates the trafficking) prevails with most of the participants. Nonetheless, we found a mix of feelings towards this trafficker who seems to be the one who triggers a fierce reaction. Among 7 cases filed against traffickers by 2 participants from Nepal and 4 from Bangladesh, 6 cases relate to the first trafficker[2].

> The ambivalence of feelings elicited by the first procurer is best illustrated in Dipti's case who says: 's*he broke our trust and caused such harm to me. She has caused such a big damage in my life. I feel like killing her now. I did not even know anything about trafficking or prostitution…*
>
> At the same time Dipti also reflects: '*It was not only the girl's fault who took me it is also me who is to be blamed for going with her as she never forced me. It was I who went with her just because I wanted to punish my mother, and also wanted to see the places that this girl wanted to take me to*'. Trust, influence, naivety participated in the relationship between Dipti and the trafficker: *'I trusted her and whatever she told me, it got into my mind and had an influence on me. I was very young and did not have the ability to think much. But that girl was also young and did not know much about  the people who asked her to take me to them. So I can't blame her completely'. Finally,  she considers that this girl was not fully responsible and she was also lured by other traffickers. The ambivalence, guilt, identification with the trafficker were all present even though Dipti did file a case against her and became aggressive towards her when she saw her at the tribunal of justice.*

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[2]The cases presented here is a biased population as the NGO in Bangladesh is primarily involved in legal aid for

survivors. Therefore it is natural that all survivors sourced by them would have cases lodged against their first procurer. This trend may not be a reflection of the general population of trafficked survivors because when the girls are rescued from Bombay, a case is lodged against the brothel manager there. There are no mechanisms to identify who was the first procurer from Bangladesh or Nepal, who sold her to the brothel. It appears that Interpol should be investigating this inter-country, though their role in trafficking cases is not clear. In this case some NGOs have taken initiatives to support survivors to register complaints against the first procurer.

Betrayal of trust is also mentioned by Mou (22 years old, Bangladesh): *'I had a faith on this person but I never thought he would have betrayed me. Let's say you have asked me to come for this interview and I did come, I could never think that you might do any harm to me, just like that - I also trusted him. I thought he is a person from my husband's village and also was related to my husband so he would not mean any harm to me'.* Because the person is from the same family, the same village, Mou did not feel threatened, she was trustful.

Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) points the first person who talks to her about the job in India; she trusted the woman as she was a mother of a daughter: *'I used to look at them as my elder brothers [traffickers who accompanied her to Mumbai, Ed], I liked them but I don't know whether they liked me. But I don't remember them much now. But I remember that woman at my village who first told me about work. I sometimes wonder whether she would sell her own daughter like she helped sell me. She was also a woman and she also had a daughter. I trusted her though my mother told me to not talk to her'.* The image the trafficker gives is important to gain the trust. In Sairah's case, the image of the 'protective mother' was more important that the person herself. Trustworthiness and credibility are the main means that makes the procurer believable.

Apart from 4 participants from Bangladesh who did not know they were leaving their country, all others participated in the decision making process or independently – without asking a second opinion - took the decision to leave their country but did not know the risks involved, or that there was a possibility of being sold into servitude for prostitution. It seems that lack of information, willingness to acquire a better social and economic status contributed to the decision to leave home. One common pattern that is associated with the decision to make the journey is the absence of assessment of risks. The unknown and uncertainty is never discussed at that stage. They rely completely on the trafficker (usually a familiar person), or on another person who is also trafficked. They do not allude to the possibility of getting into trouble. Only, the destination and the objective of the journey matters. Moreover idealization of future life and destination prevents the person from foreseeing the situation objectively and assessing potential risks. Besides they have difficulties conceptualizing that crossing border illegally is a criminal act.

One could therefore discuss the role and responsibility of the decision maker and/ or shared responsibilities between several people who directly and/or indirectly participated in the process. Even though it is obvious that the first trafficker (procurer) is manipulative and ultimately responsible for the trafficking, the responsibility of other stakeholders (particularly parents, grandparents, other relatives, neighbours or community leaders) is rather vague and pertain to two main reasons: the inability of the survivor to consider the role she played in her trafficking and the

difficulty to accuse some family members especially if the survivor's mother is involved. Trauma, guilt, shame may prevent the survivor to deal with emotional and cognitive aspects of trafficking. The capacity to reflect on that part of her experience is altered and it would require further psychological support to work through it.

Impulsive behaviours are one of the squeal of trauma (Foreman, 2012). What seems to be an impulsive behaviour is rather the result of a strategy as the departure is always prepared. Only the moment is not decided in advance. It is like they wait for an external event to happen – to confirm their decision or to make them feel less responsible for their act. The violence, abuse and exploitation participants have described at homes, families and communities, and marriage – does not paint a very safe picture, and therefore it is natural that they may be idealizing any other situation when compared to their pre-trafficking condition. Therefore, the urge of leaving their life and to accomplish another life somewhere else may be depicted as a life, which can only be different and imagined as better. This idealization and desire to escape their adverse condition makes the move worth leaving everything behind. The impact of experiencing multiple traumas is idealization of elsewhere. This is underlined by the girl's helplessness, hurt and pain. Therefore, impulsivity in this case refers to a suspension of judgment.

In this research we have not found any participants saying that they knew what happens with girls when they leave home, have not found any reference of researchers asking if they know of migrant men or women – they have talked about others who have migrated. Also, the level of sensation seeking may be higher among individuals who have faced traumatic situations and therefore they focus on new sensations more than the means to achieve it. That could explain the need to trust the trafficker, the need to depend on his/her/word, the need to believe that there is a better future awaiting, and the need to repress/ suppress any caution, warning or apprehension.

The community vigilance mechanisms for children or adolescents leaving homes and villages are not efficient in checking migration of children and young adults. This is perhaps because migration in young adults or adolescents is prevalent in all these communities, and families sending their adolescent daughters and sons for work to the cities is not an uncommon phenomenon, and hence does not raise alarm. Perhaps there is particularly true if this community earns through remittance there will be reasons for the community to be exigent.

Trafficking occurs due to vulnerabilities and when someone is present with an intent to abuse such vulnerabilities which are usually concentrated within families and communities. Furthermore, some vulnerabilities make children and young people more easily identifiable by traffickers which include children who are married, families where there is domestic violence, children abandoned by parents, single headed - women headed families, where one parent may have migrated and abandoned the family or children, children orphaned and living with grandparents with indications of financial difficulties – all such psychosocial indicators indicating possibilities of loose attachment and a possible idealization of migration amongst the women and children in those families may be sought by traffickers

## DESCRIPTION OF THE JOURNEY

A generic description of the transportation or the journey showed that after the decision was made, the person was then isolated from her family, taken away - the trafficker has already arranged the journey to  the place where the victim will be sold - and confined in a place, without her consent. Isolation and confinement happened before crossing the border or after depending on the lure set for the girl. They may cross the border alone or with other trafficked victims or with families who migrate. Crossing borders requires some arrangements with border police but for all cases it remains a sensitive part of the journey. For this reason, trafficked victims were sometimes drugged which made them less resistant. 5 participants have reported feeling of disorientation, loss of memory that lasted longer or shorter. Among them, 3 did not know they were crossing the border.

The suspicion of danger started when victims were asked and/or told something they considered as unexpected: to hide in a room, a place, to dress in a certain way or when life threat was used if they did not obey. Rape and physical violence were also common methods of violence to intimidate victims, so that they may be easier to control.

> Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh) narrates the beginning of her journey: *'When she [the trafficker, Ed] took me with her and left me at her cousin brother's place that man raped me. I was never prepared for that. I was just a child. I felt so distressed because I was just a child and I was not ready for this kind of a physical attack at all. I have never shared this with any one before. Because no one will ever understand that I had to go through such pain for this. They think I am a bad girl so what's the difference if I get raped or not'.* Dipti trusted the woman who brought her to that place, she ended up in a trap. She experienced a sexually traumatic event: it was unexpected and violent, she was helpless and unguarded. The feeling that nobody can understand how she suffered is common among survivors. She finds difficult to give a meaning to what had happened to her.

> On the other hand, the journey of Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) started as if she was immigrating to India. She clearly remembered her journey to Mumbai and she could describe every details from her stay in Kolkata to her journey by train to Mumbai: *'I stayed at Kolkata in that house for eleven days. Wherever that woman went, she would take me with her, she would even ask whether I wanted to come with her or not and I would tag along. I liked doing that. The way she used to behave with me, it never occurred to me that they were going to sell me into sex trade. Her behaviour was very good with me. Good food, good place, always allowed me to tag along, asked me what I liked, etc. On the 12th day, they put me up on a train. We got on to a bus at 8 AM and got off at noon. Thereafter, he took me to a station, which did not look like Howrah station. I would have recognized Howrah station immediately. Then I asked him which station was this and he said Howrah. I argued with him that this was not Howrah station but he insisted that it was. So I was going to ask someone else about the name of the station, then he told me: 'why don't you sit inside the train? I would tell you the name later on'. Then I did not ask anything. The train took three days to reach Mumbai'.* As she insisted, the man threatened her to send her to a 'bad place' and her understood she could be caught by police and sent to jail (for being an

illegal immigrant). Thus, she remained silent and did not probe anymore. She knew she was sold when she reached the brothel.

The tacit acceptance of one's role in the process gets enmeshed with the coercion of the trafficker. Thus the girl realizes the implication of her leaving home, crossing border, not informing her family, and basically violating numerous norms that tell her that she is now on a deviant pathway. Coupled with this realization is the dependency she feels on her trafficker, whose threats now shuts her up more effectively and numbs her ability to seek help. The self-blame that emanates from her norm violating awareness gets translated as 'I have no right to ask for help now'. This is perhaps why the world, and a very populated world of public transport in India gets shut out of her awareness and does not feature in any part of her narratives.

Threat by the trafficker and fear of being caught by police left Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) with the thought that she should not talk to anyone around her about the trafficker and herself. She narrates: *'there was only one man in the train with me and he told me if anyone asked, I should say that he was my husband. I wondered why he was asking me to do that. So I told him that I would state the truth. Then he said that if I did not say that, then he would take me to the bad work place and if I did comply, then he would take me to a good work place. So then I thought that there was a threat this chance of taking me being taken to a bad place, he could even leave me in the midway, I was quite worried and I was even afraid that since I was a Bangladeshi, what if the police caught me and sent me to Jail? Then it would be even more problematic. All of these made me quiet and then I stopped asking him any more questions'.* Sairah thought she was protecting herself from further harmful situations. She went to Mumbai and she was told she was sold for three years where she ended up in the brothel.

Whatever places they were sexually exploited, they all had a time of reckoning when they learnt that they had been sold. This happened either after crossing the borders or when they ended up in a brothel. It was explained by the trafficker or some other sex workers in the brothel that triggered fear, anxiety, and distress. They feared losing complete contact with their families and from all form of communication and they experienced distress from the uncertainty of the entire experience unfolding.

They learnt they had been sold and they had to pay back the 'debt' incurred to reclaim their freedom. Willingly or not - meaning that they were given the choice even fake choice - they joined the sex trade. The logic that makes them accept bondage or slavery is that of debt. They are not questioning the debt itself. The debt creates a sense of finiteness – on one hand there is fear of bondage and losing all contact with family and on the other hand the proposal of them being able to get out of the situation by repaying the debt created a finite possibility. At least for these participants this was the context of accepting and agreeing to prostitution.

> Sapana was 13 years old when she was trafficked. She learnt she was sold while she was in the brothel: *'At that home, there were so many rooms and they were very small. Only one bed could be adjusted. All the women used very red lipstick like brides use in my village and wore very short dress that I had not even seen in the movies. There were Tamang woman and I asked them what they were doing here, they replied me that they were cooks. I*

*thought why they were wearing too short clothes and were very beautiful while cooking but I did not tell them. I was locked in the room and I asked about my friends and other girls who were along with me. They replied me they would come tomorrow. Next day, they told me to do the make-up. Then I saw the black man came there. I never saw that kind of man. Then my heartbeat was increased. I cried a lot. Next day, they told me that I was sold. Then I knew that I was trafficked. I cried a lot'.* Sapana noticed some incongruities and then she becomes afraid. She does not mention trafficking before she is told. This triggers distress. When things seem incongruous it induced fear and anxiety and this kept building up. She did ask questions but not necessarily satisfied. She did not seem to be able to seek help from anybody at that point.

The illusion of the 'debt' is commonly used by traffickers: the person is told she could be free when she will repay the debt. She is also ensured she will get the money she makes after she has repaid the debt. This economic aspect is significant in the relationship between the trafficker and the victim, it is the primary instrument for servitude that is thrust upon the victim. In certain cases, the possibility of the debt being repaid and exit from servitude gives the hope for a better future with some economic power, and at this point, sexual exploitation turns out to be work as any other job, the trafficker gets an image of a protector who is taking care of the victim (from being caught by the police) and her money. Based on false trust and managed with manipulative means, the victim believes she is entitled to gain money from her work. It also acts as a passport to freedom for some girls and women. However this debt never ends. Freedom from bondage finally occurs either if police rescues the victims or if she manages to escape on her own. In case of the survivors living in RLA there is apparently a shift in autonomy and independence in terms of control over their earnings, but they are still unable to free themselves psychologically.

## LIFE IN EXPLOITATION

### Sexual exploitation

During the research, participants referred to sexual exploitation as: bad line, bad profession, 'chnoda Chnudi' (fucking line), 'Veshya' work, Dhanda (sexual work). Depending on their experience, choices, adjustment, needs and desires, their point of view on sexual exploitation ranged from 'a horrible experience that should not have happened' to 'a work'. Mou (22 years old, Bangladesh) calls it a bad profession: *'I hate prostitution...I don't even want to visit India ever again and I hope and pray that even my enemy does not get in to a brothel there by any chance. It is such a bad profession that makes you feel so low to yourself even. It is something that can only bring shame, pain and distress'.* While for Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh), it is another day at work: *'yes another thing that I have learnt is not to involve myself in the sex work, the man may think that I am having sex with him, but I am faking it. For me it would be a normal day at work.'*

For the present sample, sexual exploitation took place in different locations: in a brothel in the Red Light Area, in a flat in a residential area, in various other places where girls were moved according to economic opportunities. According to their descriptions, life in brothels seemed harsher: confinement, more deprivation, clients were more violent. The ones living in a flat moved to various

places to meet clients including hotels, lodges, homes based upon calls managed by pimps. They experienced more freedom and felt relatively better protected.

Regarding their life in those places, participants reported neglect, abuse and deprivation: lack of intimacy, not being given individual attention, lack of freedom, confinement, no possibility to build any relationship, lack of trust, food and sleep deprivation and uncertainty. But they also reported some positive aspects such as privileges, care, freedom and friendship. Both of these aspects were sometimes interrelated depending on the living conditions and the way participants dealt with them.

## THE UNCERTAINTY AND THE COERCION: Using fear to shape behaviour

Keeping victims in a situation when her environment is insecure, deceptive and unpredictable is a way to control and exercise power over her. Numerous means are used to ensure the victims submit to the control and not escape.

For example, they are hidden when the brothels are raided by the police. When raids happen, they are told the police is not to be trusted, which alters their judgement of trusting, and they are offered privileges which reinforces the trust upon the trafficker by creating emotional ties and positive bonds. By being cut off from life outside, they lose sense of time. An uncertain future makes them accept exploitation in their daily life. Fear is used as a weapon to rule out any effort of escaping. Through a series of manipulations the victims are kept in an unpredictable situation and are kept scared. This mechanism helps in making the victims totally dependent on her 'managers'.

> Upon her arrival in the brothel, Sapana (20 years old, Nepal) was shocked. Because she found everything new and there was no way to escape, she did not try to escape: *'It was quite unheard to escape from that place. No one was there to help me and rescue me. Everything was new. Even those other Nepali girls, whom I considered to be friends, led me into trouble - so how could I trust anyone in that place. I was afraid that even if I did escape from that place, I had no idea how to return back to my country. The brothel owner always told me to hide from the police and I thought that if police found me, I could be in more trouble. That's why I did not seek help from the police. I also thought that if the police directly reached me home after rescue, then my family would think badly of me (because they would find out she was in prostitution, ed.)'.*

### Fear of abuse and violence

Violence is used as an effective tool to instil fear in a trafficked victim to make them comply with the demands of sex trade. Violence by clients is high as they may use threats with weapon, force to perform sexual acts, including sex without condoms. According to the women, there was sometime no protection from clients who used threat of violence to subjugate and coerce them in performing certain sexual acts or service. The manager does not always protect the girls. In such circumstances, they relied more on each other, or found ways to defend themselves from threatening clients by running away from the room, choosing clients who were known to be less violent, etc.

Reshma described the violence they face and the lack of help from anyone: '*We needed to ask customers to come with us. We needed to snatch their hands and attract them. They felt that it was our wish to do that and may be felt that we deserved bad behaviour as we were there to earn money. They behaved as they wished. Some customers came with blade, and some with pistol'. 'One man tried to cut me with blade. The customers tried to do as they wished. If the girls didn't want to do that, they threatened in many ways. Someone tried to choke the neck. The room of the owner was farther. There were many gates and the rooms were like tunnel without any windows. Many girls were killed. Their spirits roamed in those rooms and we were sometimes threatened by so called ghosts.*' From the scenes Reshma described, we understand that they face extreme forms of violence from customers and in that same place managers are not ensuring any kind of protection.

Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) described the violence from the clients and the way she dealt with them: '*And then there were men who would behave like animals… like when an animal finds a chicken or a bird and the way they would claw or paw or scratch their prey, these men used to do that. I used to come out of the room when I could not take that any more, tell the caretakers who would be there and then they would throw the man out. They would bite, press my breasts really hard and hurt me…*'

All forms of abuse were used to ensure that the trafficked person complied with the situation, and they do not try to escape, and were submissive enough with the clients. Physical and psychological abuse from different people were reported, especially in situations when the trafficked person did not agree to perform sexual services or challenged authority of madams, pimps or other authority figures. The objective it seems was to keep them under the 'management's' control and all means were used: life threats, forced drug and alcohol dependence, alcohol abuse, physical violence, public humiliation, (forced the victim to stand half naked in a public place) and food deprivation. Half of them (3 Nepalese and 5 Bangladeshi) reported violence from clients who are violent in varying degrees, threatening, and vicious. Other situations of violence may also happen with other people (pimps, women) but they are less reported. It seems that the highest in the hierarchy has the full power of domination and use violence as a management method within the brothel. The forms of violence reported are potentially traumatic experiences because either the girls are direct victims of violence and/or because they witness violence against another peer.

Mou (22 years old, Bangladesh) stayed two years in a brothel and her experience was very negative: '*there is nothing to like in the brothel... I wish I could take you to see how girls get to live there...it is dirty, unhealthy, they don't even get to eat properly and most girls are very jealous and they fight among themselves on simple issues. And worst of all was the tortures that everyone had to go through when they did not comply to the wishes of brothel mangers or the pimps. Some of the customers also were so cruel that they used to torture the girls and then the girls could not ask for help right away, because no one would have come to help her when a customer is there in the room'.*

Dipti said*: 'The food and medical care was available for all the girls. There was plenty of supplies for good clothing and other necessaries but yet the quality of life was so poor! Girls used to get badly beaten for simple reasons or for refusing any customer. No one would*

*even dare to protect anyone from the brothel manager's anger. There are also histories of girls of being killed, often brutally beaten and many incidents involving drug dealers. Girls are forced into alcohol and drug use, to the point that they become dependent on them. This is one way of keeping the girls tied to the brothel. When the owner punishes any one, he may make that girl stand naked in public for hours and brutally beat them. They make girls wear very short dresses and odd looking dresses. None of the girls would get paid for their work - they would have given us food, clothing and other necessaries but would have never allowed us to have cash. And the old women at the time of leaving the brothel never seemed to receive much from the owner even after working for almost an entire life time. The girls are not allowed to take care of each other even if someone falls sick. They are never allowed to make friends'.*

Life threats, confinement, social deprivation (no one to trust, share, rely on), harsh living conditions leads to serious consequences on mental health of survivors. The distress they face when they realize they are trapped in sexual exploitation is incommensurable. Participants described their fear of being killed and abducted, their wanting to commit suicide. Added to this, the violence from brothel managers and clients, competition between sex workers, multiple forms of deprivation, sickness, and addiction are so many challenges to their physical and psychological integrity.

Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) described the violence from the clients and the way she dealt with them: *'And then there were men who would behave like animals… like when an animal finds a chicken or a bird and the way they would claw or paw or scratch their prey, these men used to do that. I used to come out of the room when I could not take that any more, tell the caretakers who would be there and then they would throw the man out. They would bite, press my breasts really hard and hurt me, I could not take that much and I used to get out of the room even if I was half naked. And even if I told them that I was hurting, they never listened. That's when I used to get out of the room on some pretext or the other and seek help'.* Sairah could ask for help and that is the way she could adjust to the situation: by enduring a certain level of violence.

*Table 11: Life in a brothel*

|  | Source of violence | N = 13 |
|---|---|---|
| Violence in the brothel | *Violence from brothel owner* | 8 |
|  | *Violence from brothel manager* | 4 |
|  | *Violence from customer(s)* | 8 |
|  | *Violence from pimp* | 5 |
|  | *Violence from other girls* | 3 |
|  | *Humiliation* | 8 |
|  | *Witness violence against other girls* | 7 |
|  | *Heard about violence against other girls* | 12 |

|  | *Was forced to take medicine* | 5 |
|---|---|---|
|  | *Physical pain related to violence* | 7 |
| Deprivation | *Food deprivation* | 7 |
|  | *Sleep deprivation* | 10 |
|  | *Medical deprivation* | 5 |
| Relationships | *Good relationship with a customer* | 9 |
|  | *Friends in exploitation* | 7 |
|  | *Had contact with her family* | 8 |
|  | *Help from pimp* | 1 |
|  | *Help from client* | 6 |
| Other information | *Any movement while in trafficked* | 6 |
|  | *Some freedom* | 6 |
|  | *Any privileges* | 5 |
|  | *Has sent money to her family while in RLA* | 1 |

## THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

As in any social group, the trafficked victim in exploitation takes part in a group dynamic with different managers (brothel owner, brothel manager, pimp, etc.) and other women/girls living in the same place. While trying to understand roles of different actors within the brothel, it is challenging to elicit a clear picture of the persons present and the distinction between brothel owners, manager, and pimp because it was not necessarily enquired during the interview. For the sake of making it simple, we have used 'brothel manager' to refer to this person who was at times referred to as the owner, pimp, and madam. As the research seeks to understand interpersonal relationships with other individuals present in the brothel, participants have usually mentioned the main characters with whom they interacted the most.

The social system in the brothel was a grey zone: positive as well as negative experiences were reported. While most of them could not accept the situation, some found some advantages and positive outcomes: being cared for, being given attention, having some freedom, etc. More surprisingly they all managed to sustain the harshness of the situation albeit bearing physical and psychological scars. In order to understand how they managed to survive in exploitation, it is essential to analyse the dynamics of the exploitation system. Within trafficking, everyone participated in the system in place, passively or actively. This section explores the relationship of the victim with the owner/manager/madam, clients and other girls in the brothel.

### Brothel manager and the victim

Some brothel managers were depicted as cruel and aggressive. They essentially used physical and psychological violence as a means to manage their brothels.

> From the monodrama exercise, Dipti described her manager as a violent and sadistic person: *'The chief in the brothel is like the poisonous ant. This insect is poisonous and he was also poisonous as he used to inflict severe pain on the girls and beat them so badly that they would get many bruises and cuts. It is also like a beetle that lives on dung because that person also did not have any intelligence and that's why he makes the girl do all the nasty work.'*

> In the case of Reshma, violence was exercised by the brothel manager who was a woman: *'I had not been allowed to talk with other girls of the brothel. Everyone had their own activities. Nobody would like to share the feelings with each other. I had only option to follow the order of brothel owner. When I did not follow the order, she used to beat me. That's why I had no option beside to follow the order of the brothel… 'If we had pain and suffering and I were sick, I couldn't tell anyone, neither friends nor owner. Even if we had pain, we were compelled to work'.*

> Pori (29 years old, Bangladesh) was directly exposed to high level of violence (considering intensity and frequency). The threat was always present: '*I was forced to do a lot of bad*

*things. If I didn't do these things, they would have killed me. They did so many things to force me into this work I can't even tell you. It was such a humiliating experience. I suffered every moment during my two months of stay over in that place. I was abused by 280 people during those two months. It was so intolerable that at one point I poured Dettol all over my body to get away from all those awful feelings. I wasn't that dark before but after that my skin became dark... [pause] After suffering from all those pains and humiliations I survived and got back here.* Today, she carries the physical wounds from the violence that she endured and complains about psychological symptoms indicating high level of distress. That reminds her the violence she endured. She also reported about psychological symptoms that showed a high level of psychological distress.

Siyana described the way the madam took care of her. In order to prevent Siyana from being rescued, she would take her away and would organize and offer her some pleasant time: '*whenever there was police raid, she would take me out. Twice she would take me to movies, or otherwise, she would take me to restaurants to have pizza, taken me to Haji Ali (a religious place in Mumbai), then she took me to a temple also. I also watched Singham (a film) with her'.* Siyana is grateful for the attention she was given. The madam used and probably abused Siyana's immaturity and need for care. That probably also served the purpose of preventing Siyana from escaping.

Sairah also recalled having a better relationship with her brothel manager and other associates of the brothel: she experienced support and did not report the use of violence. The brothel manager, taught her how to behave, how to talk to people, how to dress, how to relate to others without being reactive, in other words, how to be submissive. She appreciated her very much. It is important to note that Sairah practically chose that woman among other women. '*I don't think I understood what was happening then. Then that fat woman called another woman who was standing outside and told me that you please go with this woman and she will take you to my house. So I went with that other woman thinking that I was going to that fat woman's house as a housemaid'.* She was then explained the job she would have to do. She first refused; the woman explained to her that she was sold and had to work for the next 3 years to pay back. Sairah had no choice than to accept.

Sometimes, there was a sense of protection towards the brothel manager who supported the victim even if it is for their own benefit. About the madam who helped her getting into her work, Jamila (35 years old, Bangladesh) would say: '*no, no, she is no one to blame... She just facilitated this and when I decided to join this work, she helped me in getting clients and work... so how is she to blame? I chose this and only then she helped me. So it's not her fault at all. She still lives here in this area in that gali [street, Ed.]... I still meet her many times. I think she helped me in keeping myself alive when there was no way else.'* She is grateful to this woman who helped her to survive.

The social system in a brothel intended to erase any individual characteristics, needs and desires in persons in order to ensure their total submission to the brothel's rules. They were given new names; they were given new clothes that changed their appearance and affected their body image and self-esteem. They were treated more or less equally to other girls as there were no mention of

competitiveness between inmates of a brothel. Unless they find a protector who would give privileges – for instance by selecting best clients or providing a cell phone, the objectification becomes a way to instrumentalize the girls and to disregard any wishes for rebellion. They were prevented from having a social life. Role confusion may incidentally and intentionally be established in the minds of the victim, who were ambivalent in their feelings towards the brothel manager who is the protector may also be the predator. Though the participants reported the use of violence by brothel manager, the same functionary was also described as a protector in a sense that he/she ensures some living conditions (even forced), protection from the police and raids (which survivors perceived as being caught and punished by the State).

In this interface between the brothel manager and girl, there could be that the girl becomes an object of something to the person. But in general the brothel was like a business organization so otherwise she was just an object that prostitutes. The attachments, which might bring her different kind of privileges by and large were only instruments for the organization. For example, Dipti was allowed to send home the money she earned in such torturous conditions. This may appear to be a privilege on its face, but could be a way to avoid eliciting suspicious from the girl's family about her whereabouts. Often parents raised the alarm and reported their children being missing only when they stopped receiving their regular remittances.

Just like an organization, if the girls earned better profits they stood a chance of being 'rewarded'. The narratives seemed to reflect the victim's sense of detachment from all her pain, as if to say that she is an instrument, who has to be subjugated. Her personhood was already diminished as we refer to her being reduced to object in the context of her martial family. In a similar way she ceases to be a person and is becoming an object in an institution of sex work. An object of non-value, non-desire in family. Here she became an instrument of profit. For the time she is brought into the brothel, from being a trafficked to get her to internalize subjugation, it is like an induction programme. What impact is use of violence having on her, doesn't matter to the exploiter. For that person she ceases to be a person.

## Customers

There is no sexual exploitation without customers. Besides, traffickers and peers – other trafficked girls or sex workers – participants are in contact with customers. They describe them according to their marital status, their preference for girls' age, their inclination to be violent, their financial status, and their desire for sex, giving a fairly good sociological picture of the clients.

> For Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh), they are different categories of customers: *'They feel good and they come because they feel satisfied. Some of the customers use to say they need different girls for enjoying sex. Some of them live far from family or have got sick wives. But for some people, it is a way of enjoying sex… they come for enjoying new girls every time and these are the people who come more often. Married, middle aged customers are awful because they cause so much injury sometimes but the young unmarried customers are usually much better in terms of how they deal with the girls. Sometimes the customers don't want to pay and even physically assault the women. But this is more*

*common with the low-income group customers'.* In that context girl's age is considered a value for money: '*The young girls usually don't have to face these troubles as they are kept for customers who are in priority for brothel managers. Some of the young customers also develop attachment to a particular sex worker and they become a permanent customer for that girl. These are the people who always ask the girls to leave the brothel, and prostitution'.* Dipti has probably met some of the young men working for NGOs who tried to rescue girls from exploitation. As she described, Dipti was one of these young girls who were protected and had the privilege to could choose their clients. This had somehow helped her cope with her life in the brothel. Some of the girls are saying that overall it was a violent and exploitative situation. While some girls are saying it wasn't always violent it was grey. This has somehow helped her sustain the stress and traumatic experience in the brothel.

Some clients may also be a source of emotional support: 9 participants reported a good relationship with at least one client. In these relationships, clients were described as one who did not ask for sex, those who became regular client and clients who became their lovers (a regular client need not be a lover). Half of the participants reported having grown to build intimate relationships with at least one customer. This person is described as being attentive to them, engages with them in ways other than sexually, being supportive, willing to take risks for them (even willing to help them to escape the brothel). At times, this relationship grows into permanent arrangements, some kind of exclusivity. For example, one of the survivors having grown to become intimate with a client, eventually got into an arrangement wherein when the girl and this client wanted to spend time with each other, the girl would have to pay the brothel manager from her income to buy time to spend with this client (who, in her mind, was no longer a client, but a boyfriend…also in the mind of the brothel manager, so she is spending time with him that does not bring in any money).

> For example, Sairah having grown to become intimate with a client, eventually got into an arrangement wherein when the girl and this client wanted to spend time with each other, the girl would have to pay the brothel manager from her income to buy time to spend with this client (who, in her mind, was no longer a client, but a boyfriend). She found help – they would buy her things - and emotional support – she could talk with them - with several costumers. Among them, one she considered as her lover till she found out that he was married: '*I was so blind in his love that I paid money from my pocket to the madam of the brothel for him, if he spent half an hour I paid Rs. 400 and if he spent an hour then I paid her an hours fee. And if stayed the night with me, I paid more than 1500 or 1600 to the madam. Apart from his, I paid for his mobile, etc. its only when he went away that I was told that he was married.* Then, there is her last boyfriend with whom she would like to marry. For him, she would come back to India.

Inside the trafficking, everyone participates in the system in place, passively or actively. From the description made by participants, life in the brothel corresponds to two kinds of exploitation system:

- One is a familial system. In a family for example compliance and order amongst the workers is brought through affiliated identity building. A role adopted by a person in a family is ascribed an identity is defined. This is reinforced through rituals, expression of affect, bonding etc. In some of the brothels is it is seen that this is the way the girls are inducted. For example the brothel manager would invest in building a relationship with the girl. These are the ways in which membership is inculcated and encouraged. There will be overt concern about safety and protection of girls from police.

- The other is a business system. In that everything is transactional. The girls are treated as commodities that are sold. Such commodities are controlled by coercion, manipulation, violence, humiliation, building membership, privileges with power and compensation. If the commodity brings in profits it becomes valuable and deviance from the business standard is punished.

Whole significance of this subsection is that the system of exploitation and a survivor's experiences in such situations will depend on several factors such as the nature of management of the brothel – the leadership and its impact on her relationship with her clients, peers and brothel managers. Having a violent manager or a permissive manager will affect the nature of a victim's experiences, her ease or difficulties in taking stances in a retributive process and in punishing the brothel manager. In case of permissive managers, who invest in developing a relationship with the victim, it will also create confusions about power, authority, violence, care and protection. The intricate way in which these experiences are associated with the victim's changed belief system will need emotional and cognitive clarification during the recovery process. If service- providers are not open about the greyness, or the nuances of the system where she has experienced exploitation there may be a disjuncture between her experience and the counsellor's/NGOs/system's expectation of her victimhood.

## STRATEGY OF ADJUSTMENT

The capacity to adapt/adjust to aversive situations depends not only on individual characteristics but also on the context during exploitation. Some contexts allow privileges to girls and women once they comply, or submit and this may include – freedom, shopping, calling their families – while other contexts would be highly repressive – physical isolation and social deprivation and violence on daily basis. Nonetheless in both environments, respondents developed some protective attitudes such as defiance, aggressiveness, addiction, etc. that helped them to deal with the violence, the deprivation, and the unexpected. They developed strategies to survive: avoidance, submission, hope to escape, supportive relationships with peers and clients that helped them survive the violence. They create a system of protection within the brothel and/or they have their own way of managing clients (by threats, screaming to call other women, running away from their room, etc.).

> Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) found her own way to treat customers, indicating her ability to deal with violence in an effective way: *'there are many customers who are different, some ask us to give up this line, some abuse you and want to force you or ridicule you. However, I learnt to treat them back in their own coin. [She gives example of customer*

*using rude or abusive language and her using the same intonation or language back with the same customer, Ed;] once you learn to do that, they do not have the upper hand on you. If you are soft, they abuse you more, but if you are tough, they become subdued'*. In case of extreme forms of violence used by customers, Sairah, would 'get out of the room under some pretext and ask for help'. In Sairah's case her brothel manager was supportive and protective too.

Another form of self-protection emerged with respect to convincing client to use condoms and protect themselves against STD's, pregnancies and HIV.

Reshma (21 years old, Nepal) described how to persuade clients to use condoms: *'I convinced them by saying that I have to have sex with different person and some of them may be infected therefore if you want to be safe, it is necessary to use condom. I also convinced them by saying that if they are not infected, unprotected sex can make them infected…because in the brothel, no one can guarantee of not being uninfected. And the chances of transmission are always high. Anyone infected person may transmit the disease'.* That was one way for her to protect herself. She also added that she had to pay for condoms herself.

Pori (27 years old, Bangladesh) used to be friendly with her peers so that she could benefit from advantages that were given to them in order to plan her rescue: *'I had good terms with many of the girls. Some of them had mobile phones. I was offering them my service to keep them happy after my usual work. I offered them massage and other care but in my mind I was trying rapport with them so that they could allow me to use their mobile phones. I developed good relationship with a girl named […] and I used her mobile phone to talk to my family in Bangladesh'.* This is the way she managed to call her family for help and be rescued.

Primarily the narrative revealed their problem solving techniques. It is common for survivors of trauma to also use a number of other techniques that help them cope with events that cannot be controlled. Such coping or adjustment techniques would also emerge when the survivor is being rehabilitated either in a shelter home, community, family or when the survivor moves from bondage to autonomy in sex work as was the case with Jamila and Rahini (survivors who were in RLA).

Presently, Rahini appeared to be undergoing stress in terms of tensed relationship with her children. It emerged that she was well connected with her emotions and coped with her problems through a lot of imagery, songs and dance. She had found a way to release her tension in a way that made her feel better. On the other hand Jamila (who lives outside the RLA and visits it only to earn money whenever she needs), who had carved out a separate identity from herself outside RLA, where nobody knew what work she did, was suffering from a sense of hopelessness and inability to shake off the feeling of being totally dependent.

Looking at the narratives of the girls who escaped themselves from the situation, Dipti, Ranu, Reshma and Upasana experience a sense of control and better ability to deal with their post rescue

conditions. While Upasana shows a willingness to do something meaningful by getting an education and helping others, Reshma too has a goal despite facing social stigma. Reshma showed insight into the situation of trafficking and appeared to balancing the difficulties and her own motivation to do something better well. Pori too sees herself as more confident and stronger post the experience

## PHYSICAL HEALTH AND SEXUALITY

The physical consequences of life in sexual exploitation are dramatic and serious. Due to multiple forms of violence, participants' physical health outcomes are severe with long-lasting effects. Most of them said they were treated when they were sick but we cannot confirm whether the treatment was adequate and who delivered the medical service. If some participants have received proper medical care, others were less fortunate. No medical care, forced to take some medicines, no use of condoms were the main threats to their physical integrity. All participants report physical pain from sexual activity and/or from violence (burnt, cuts, beating up, sores, etc.). 8 participants reported physical even at the time of the interview. Their body bears the mark of their suffering. The pain will last long after, even after having left the situations.

> Pori (27 years old, Bangladesh) was victim of violence many times from different people. When she draws her body (see body map exercise), she described: *'Well there is also a pain in that part; It is still bruised [She pointed out the place near her sex organ and marked this without saying which part it is, Ed;]. It got bruised in India. It received a lot of pressure while I was forced to work there in that brothel. I took medicine to relieve the pain, but it still aches a bit now.'* Her body is also marked by domestic violence: *'There are some pains in around my body where my second husband used to beat me; like the joints of my hands and feet where he beat me. I was also beaten in these places while I was in India; if I didn't comply with what they ordered me to do (She showed her the joints of her hands, Ed.].* She also associates physical pain and mental suffering: *'That mental pain is so much and it hurts over there (she showed the area near her chest/heart) and sometimes it also hurts in my head and then I pour water over my head to get rid of the pain and stays silent for some time for the pain to go away… These pains will never go away and will be there until I die. These pains are so intricately involved with me and my life that these will be with me as long as I am alive.*

For some participants, sexual exploitation was also their initiation to sexuality. Learning to seduce, to respond to someone's sexual needs, to endure sexual violence was once part of their daily life. Most participants recall it as a bad experience. Nonetheless, some would have also found some pleasure with some clients. Sex being reduced to an activity or work was also part of their experiences.

> When she was asked whether she had ever liked having sex with a client, Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) answered: '*not really. I never really liked it. Initially I may have liked it a bit but later when I understood more about my body and myself, I started feeling even worse. What have I done, why did I do this, come here? I should never have come here. Etc.'* It seems that becoming conscious about her situation has brought guilt and self-blame that have triggered negative feelings and a negative body image.

The way they have experienced their sexuality had some positive and negative consequences on their body image, their self-esteem and their sexuality.

> About sexuality, Jamila (35 years old, Bangladesh) did not see any difference between sexuality within marriage and sexuality in prostitution. Besides, she was not preoccupied by her physical appearance and by the opinion of others. She was confident that she could attract men based on her attitude and not on her physical attractiveness. She probably knew how to entertain and she was aware that people liked her company. Even though she appeared self-assured, there was a split between her body image and her mind. The way she talked about her body showed the difficulty to assimilate her own image as a sex worker: *'I have done all this knowing it all. No point in running away from it… I know that even when I die, no vultures or dogs will eat this body/ flesh of mine because of how sinful I have been. I keep asking myself why I got into this… I cry every night till my pillow cover also gets completely wet… I have been blind while all this was going on... [She got very emotional and started sniffling, Ed.]'*.

During exploitation, some recognized they gained some knowledge about sexuality. While others did not. They emphasized that being exposed to those situations allowed them to assess a person and his intention. They are less credulous than they used to be. The survivors saw their approach to sexuality differently than non survivors. Curiosity related to sexual experience had diminished and was rejected. It needs to be noted that discussing about sexuality was not comfortable for them though they did not avoid the topic. A trend was observed that girls who were in shelter homes in Mumbai appeared to be relatively open about talking on sexuality than girls who had gone back to Bangladesh. The old environment, which was sexually non- permissive, did have an impact on the way they described sexuality during their interviews. Also responses generated by the male interviewer were fewer than the ones generated by female researchers. As compared to girls who went back to their families in Bangladesh the girls in Nepal were more at ease.

> Upasana (18 years old, Nepal) was at ease with the topic. She was not judgmental about it. She believed there was a difference between survivors and non-survivors in terms of knowledge about sexuality, experience of sexuality: *'the people who are not falling prey to in trafficking and who are not sexually exploited, they may have the curiosity about sex but we survivors have no curiosity about sex.. But sex is a biological need whether they may be survivors or not but we survivors have no curiosity about sex because we already experienced it. We know what it is. So we do not have interest in it'.* She could talk about sexuality without shame and guilt.

> Sapana (20 years old, Nepal), also talked about not being curious about sex anymore. She said, '*I have no curiosity about it but non survivors may have the curiosity and want to listen to such talk. I have negative experience about it but non survivors may not. Today I have no interest in these things but still non survivors may have.'* She thought it might affect her marital life. Essentially it had killed her curiosity and left her feeling negative towards sex in general.

The link between the past and the present was imprinted in their bodies and mind. There was a time during exploitation when they felt they had no control over their body and now it appeared that they were trying to gain that control back.

> When she is asked to draw her body, Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) explained she likes the way she looks but not the way she feels *'but now I think I have turned into a bad person ever since I have come to Mumbai'*. Sairah dislikes her vagina since she started doing this work. The ambivalence around her body image is predominant. She splits her vagina as it is a separate part of her body. The amalgam between her external and inner image shows her difficulties to distinguish herself as a person and herself as a trafficked person. Both are mixed which proves the efficiency of the exploitation system that creates assimilation and alienation between the individual and the action. Protecting and controlling become essentials even though it is rarely possible: *'when I was there, I was not very happy so I hardly used to smile. Later once I realised that I had no power over myself or my body and that's why I had to do that work'.* Now she tries to empower herself again and she is convinced that no one can force her to do anything against her will.

Life in exploitation was an individual as well as a collective experience. Good or bad, with or without benefit, their experiences have revealed the diversity of situations encountered and the way they dealt with adversity. We will now see the implications of these experiences in the path from exploitation to rehabilitation.

## RESCUE/ESCAPE

There are only two ways to be free from sexual exploitation: by escaping or by being rescued. Among the participants, 4 escaped and 7 were rescued by the police.

In most cases, due to fear of repression if they escape, rescue is expected… Rescue by police and/or organized by NGOs allowed some of the trafficked victims to be free from exploitation.

> Mou (22 years old, Bangladesh) waited two years for a raid to happen: *'There was a female head and I did have a good relation with one Bangladeshi girl. She wanted me to escape from there but I did not want to escape as I feared that we might get lost again and get into more troubles. I thought if we stay there and a raid takes place I shall be able to get back home once we are rescued'.*

Rescue is sometimes viewed as violent; it is unexpected and that adds to the insecurity in the brothel and the fear of going to jail.

> Upasana described the rescue process as chaotic and violent: *'They took all girls by holding their hands and keeping too many girls in a small vehicle. If they want to rescue why they did not take the brothel owner to the police station? The way of keeping in a jail and bad behaviour was not like a rescue operation. There was no freedom. Only one thing is different than brothel that there was no force on the girls to work such bad work. Besides that other things were same as brothel. I think the rescue operation of Indian police was not*

*good'.*

Among the ones who have been rescued, three participants did not want to be rescued. Reasons for not wanting to be rescued were financial (to be able to collect their earnings from the manager) and emotional (to be able to go back home which would be further delayed if they were rescued and placed in a shelter home awaiting the trail and their deposition). For them, being rescued would only postpone their return home. They would rather stay longer in exploitation and visit their family later on with their earnings.

> After spending 13 months in exploitation, Amal (20 years old) was rescued by the police. She thinks she has been caught for doing something wrong. She complains about her situation in the shelter home in comparison with her living conditions during exploitation period: '*I am a prisoner here, can't go out, can't talk to anyone, I can't send money home, nothing. I could not imagine… I wanted to get back home. There was a waiter who used to flirt with me who stopped me from coming back with the lure of another customer. Three of us were caught, me, A. and another girl from Kolkata. She has gone back to Kolkata. When the police caught me, I had given them Kolkata address. Then one of them told us that if someone came from home, then he would release us on bail within an hour…But our people came after one hour and even offered bribes, but the next set of police offers did not release us. We were sentenced for only one year but one year has passed'.* Amal was offered help to be rescued but she refused; she needed to earn money for her family. At the end, the money was not a motivation anymore: '*it is true that I am not getting money … but my life is saved'.* She finally accepted the life in shelter home.

> Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) trusted the man who helped her to be rescued as she thought she would go home earlier but it did not happen and 14 months later she still lives in the shelter home waiting for her repatriation: '*when these NGO people came to us they asked me whether I wanted to get back home or stay back there. At that time, I was in a dilemma, whether to go with them or not, as the woman who bought me had told me that she would send me home in January [that would have been January 2014, Ed.]. Then I felt quite happy. And the NGO people said that we would send you home in two or three months and I thought that was even better. That's why I came with them here but I did not expect that it would take another year or so, I did not realize'.* Sairah's goal was to go home to visit her family in Bangladesh. But some people working for NGOs also manipulate the girls in order to convince them to accept their help and be rescued. From Sairah's point of view, she made a choice and she was deceived as the man obviously lied to her.

> One late evening Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) was on the way to the hotel with other girls and one of the girls got caught by the police. '*The police used her to catch us as we were waiting for the rickshaw to come and pick us up after work got over.* During the first session, Siyana kept lamenting that living in RLA was much better as they had planned to go back home in Bangladesh during Eid and now having been caught, she has to live in the shelter home and it felt like a punishment. All the things that she was learning there may or may not be useful for her. But she had learnt to understand the value of being sensitive to others. Later she changed her mind and she admitted that she did not wish to go back to RLA.

For the women who wished to leave the sex trade, escape was rare either because the victims gave up on escaping as the punishment was too scary or because they were not able to find ways for escaping anymore. To maintain the perseverance to escape required some help, ingenuity, and hope that a chance might occur again.

> Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh) planned her escape and patiently built the strategy that provided her the opportunity to escape. She managed to satisfy the seth (brothel manager) and earn his trust. She narrates: '*Gradually he started to trust me and let me out. I was waiting for this as this was my only chance to escape from there. The seth was an alcoholic and would beat any girl for the smallest of matters. The day I escaped from there, he got drunk - I served them alcohol without water and got them all drunk. There were 8 people along with their servants and his friends when they all got drunk, my friend and I - we escaped from there. The police took us back to the seth and I begged him to let me go. I said you are like my father please let me go I will keep on trying to escape... Then the seth agreed to let me go and he said "I don't know her" he slapped me and said 'I wanted you to stay with me but seems like you won't stay with me so you better go'. Then he allowed me to go with the police...'* Dipti managed to free herself from exploitation. The police handed her to the shelter home where she stayed few months before being repatriated.

> With the help from one customer, Ranu (24 years old, Bangladesh) could contact her family and seek help from them: *'I called my father and told him that I am in great trouble and I need help. Then my father became very active and informed the police, the human rights office and journalists…'.*One day, she escaped, got into a police car in the street. After that she was sent to the shelter home of Rescue Foundation where she stayed one year and a half before being repatriated.

In several instances, clients play important roles in the girls escaping. In such cases, it is important that the girl trusts that there was someone who would help them escape. The prognosis for girls who escaped by themselves was expected to be better than girls who were rescued suddenly and against their wishes.

> Reshma (21 years old, Nepal) stayed 6 months in exploitation and 1 year and half in a shelter home in India. Then the police was bribed and she was given back to her exploiters. She stayed there 3-4 months till one customer helped her escape. She planned her escape; while in jail, she could share with other girls and review her life in exploitation. It seems that the distance from the brothel and feeling some support encouraged her to plan her escape. She narrates: *'When we returned to the brothel, the brothel owner believed us too much that we were back and earned money for them and they thought we would never escape from that place. Then they sometimes used to give us the key of gate. After that, we were making a plan to escape. One day, the customer came to me and I proposed to him my plan to return to my country. The customer asked me about staying in the brothel was forcefully or voluntary. Then I told him that I was sold and he promised me to help to escape from there. The customer was very kind to me.* Later on, he helped her escape: '*That night, we made a plan to escape early in the morning with three other friends. The customers had some money. In the morning, we escaped by locking the gate from outside because we had the key with us. We rode the rickshaw and reached the railway station'.* Then, she went

back to Nepal by bus with her sister who was trafficked as well.

> Upasana (18 years old, Nepal): *'The brothel owner promised me to send to our home in Dashain (the great festival of Nepal) but they did not. Then they promised to send in Tihar but they did not. Again they promised to send in Maghe Sakranti but they also did not send. Then we decided that they would never send us to our home and made a plan to escape. We tried several times to escape but we were not able. One day the door was not locked and all girls are watching TV and the gate keeper was ill at that time, we ran away from there.'* They escaped, reached the bus station and went to Nepal.

The ambivalence or will to remain in the sex trade does exist and cannot be ignored when researching about trafficking. Some may have found some positive benefits from their situations: financial incomes, some kind of freedom, benefits they did not have back home.

> For Jamila (35 years old, Bangladesh), the escape from prostitution was idealized. She may not have sufficiently internalised the implications and challenges she would have to face in rehabilitation, or in rebuilding her life. She narrates: *'oh yes, I always wanted to leave...even if I could get work for Rs.3000 as a domestic maid also somewhere, I would take it up… but I have never got that opportunity... no one has ever offered something like that to me to get away from here. And I don't believe in love anymore… I got married very early and then into this profession… so no love for me...'* At this point, it was difficult to know whether she wished it happened or her pessimism prevented her from formulating any changes.

Survivors described their escape in great details but narrations on rescue were sparse and there were traces of it being violent. At times rescue was unexpected and unwanted especially for the ones who had plans to go home or earn money.

However what emerges in the case of Amal, Sairah and Siyana, being 'rescued' was not synonymous with being relieved and feeling safe. Instead it created a sense of unrest and agitation as it was not what they wanted or wished for, at least apparently to themselves. In their minds they were earning money for their families and for a better life and at the end of all their suffering they were looking forward to visiting their families (Sairah's case). They seemed to have accepted their exploitation because of its promised financial incentives. Therefore being picked up by police, rescued in a raid or by a decoy customer and sent to live in a shelter home seemed to necessitate a shift in their cognitive frame of reference used to make sense of the events happening with them. Expectations of meeting family were dashed in shelter home as they realized that things would not move fast. There was no initiative on part of their rescuers to extract their dues from the brothel owner/manager either. The whole incentive of selling her body to earn money was undone.

The whole element of compensation is ignored in the case of sex trafficking. This is not so if someone is rescued from labour trafficking as an essential element of justice in case of labour trafficking is to retrieve per day earnings of the rescued labourer. From the data of this study it is increasingly clear that there is a very clear financial aspect in sex work. The idea of debt incurred by the girl who was bought by the brothel manager/owner, and the image of freeing herself from this debt by doing sex work and tolerating the violence is a very real aspect of a survivor's life, till she is rescued. Therefore, when the state picks her up from this life that makes sense to her though in a

morbid manner, it is important that the state realizes that financial compensation for the sex work done is an important element of rehabilitation and justice for such a survivor.

Since she is not compensated, when an NGO rescues her, giving her assurance of a better life and then she is stuck in a shelter home with its close door institutionalization policies, a sense of betrayal might get generated. Even when NGOs use decoy customers, the survivor essentially feels a sense of betrayal when she is brought out and not allowed to be free. The custodian approach of the current policies, generate feelings of frustration and anger and may lead to re-trafficking or further deterioration of mental health.

## EXPERIENCES OF THE REHABILITATION SYSTEM

Rehabilitation of trafficked persons is a process that is aimed at enabling them to heal, cope, integrate, develop life skills, find autonomy and assimilate in communities. Therefore rehabilitation is an ongoing process and not an outcome. Services during rehabilitation are aimed to foster recovery. If she has been disconnected from her earlier social and psychological system of belonging, then rehabilitation would mean recreating that either in the former system or in a new system.

Rehabilitation is expected to begin as soon as a victim leaves the exploitative condition either by being rescued or by escaping herself. However in reality, the period post-exploitation is far hazier: firstly because the process depends on individual capacities to recover and secondly, the rehabilitation process relies on an extended support system. Thirdly, rehabilitation is supposed to lead to reintegration of the person in her family environment or elsewhere. Thus the question remains: to which extent reintegration is possible and can be facilitated? How does the rehabilitation system allow or inhibit the process of reintegration?

*Table 12: Descriptive characteristics of post-rescue period*

| | | N=13 |
|---|---|---|
| Support system | *good relationship with her mother* | 7 |
| | *good relationship with her father* | 4 |
| | *Good family support* | 5 |
| | *her parents know she has been into sexual exploitation* | 4 |
| | *her relatives know she has been into sexual exploitation* | 5 |
| | *her neighbours know she has been into sexual exploitation* | 4 |
| Social support | *Social stigma* | 5 |
| | *Good social network* | 0 |
| | *Support from NGO after Rescue/escape* | 11 |
| | *Support from NGO today* | 12 |
| | *Good experience in shelter home* | 6 |

| Gainful engagement | *has got a job* | 6 |
|---|---|---|
| | *Study* | 4 |
| | *in relationship (not marriage)* | 2 |
| Link with exploitation | *still in contact with friends, peers in prostitution, madams, clients, others from RLA* | 6 |
| | *Has thought about going back to prostitution* | 1 |
| | *filed a case against trafficker (at least one)* | 6 |
| | *Any actual physical pain related to life in prostitution* | 5 |

## POST RESCUE REHABILITATION PROCESS

Survivors are placed in a shelter home before being repatriated. Living in a shelter home means being free from sexual exploitation. Participants acknowledged the positive aspect of the shelter home: they were no longer forced to be sexually exploited. They even had a social life with other girls, which were repressed in the brothel. They could speak their own language and expect to be freed.

> Mou (22 years old, Bangladesh) found some relief and her experience in the shelter home was positive: social sharing, being able to eat properly, finding peerage among other girls was beneficial for her: *'It was good - we all used to have food together and spend time together. There was a lot of intimacy among the Bangladeshi girls'.* She found again the social life she was deprived of in those 24 months that she was in the brothel.

> Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) described herself as rebellious and carefree during exploitation – she spent 6 months working in flats - and noticed the change in herself after rescue: *'I think the change is that when I was in the brothel, I would be defiant and would do whatever I felt like. But here, I realise that getting respect, learning something has some value… If I was outside, I would not have understood the significance of the sex trade. I may have earned more money, and it was important, but not everything'.* Living in the shelter home has provided her with some values that she praised and were lacking during the exploitation. Being outside of the exploitative system gives her the opportunity to look back at her experience and be critical, which she found positive.

At the same time some survivors felt that in a shelter home, they did not have the freedom they sometimes had in the red light area. Confinement, rules, feeling of not reaching the end of their journey and hope for return created anxieties, worries and anger. The most uncomfortable situation was probably the feeling of being caught 'in between': not being completely free and not knowing what to expect when they returned back home.

After having been forced to adjust to the living conditions in exploitation period, they were required to comply to certain adjustments again which was emotionally exhausting and stressful. The transition takes time; they need to psychologically process in order to adapt to their new environment. The process would be smoother if they had the psychological support they deserved.

## REHABILITATION PROCESS RELIES ON SEVERAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Their expectation of support from their primary system (family) still remained their main concern. For the survivors, support meant acceptance, understanding and income. 7 out of 11 participants - women who live in RLA do not receive any rehabilitation services -reported having a stable and supportive relationship with their mothers. In most cases, the mother remained the main figure for support but other members within the family could play a role in the rehabilitation process: a sister, a sister-in-law, a brother, grandmother and others. For the survivors who are mothers, protecting their children become their main objective. For them, their recovery depends on their children. Most of these relationships existed before they got trafficked. However in some cases, after survivors returned to their families, they experienced greater attention from their parents and other significant caregivers - as if the fear of losing them acted as an emotional trigger.

Most of the time, survivors do not disclose their stories to their families: fear of stigma, fear of creating emotional reactions prevented them from sharing about their life during trafficking. Only 4 out of 11 had disclosed their story to their parents/ guardians. No additional family stigma was reported by the ones who disclosed when compared to the ones who did not. The topic of trafficking was kept as a secret between the close groups of 'people who knew'.

> Upasana had told her mother, her father and her uncle; her sister knew as she was trafficked after Upasana and ended up in the same brothel. Her family was supportive: *'…on my return my family behaved well with me and I was surprised and felt that my family really loved me too much. That event of trafficking did not affect my relation with my family at all. I shared everything about the reality (of her exploitation) with my family but they did not change their behaviour with me after knowing the reality.'*

The support from NGO is almost compulsory after rescue as NGOs participate in the rehabilitation and repatriation process till the person is reunited with her family. In this sample the access is though NGOs so what happens with survivors who are kept in government shelter homes is not entirely known, assumption is that NGO provides services to them as well. In our sample of participants, 11 out of 13 benefit from support from NGOs. For some of them, the NGO acts as a mother figure: she protects, cares for, provides help and attention, is always available when needed, educates and raises, supports them in their transition from victimhood to becoming survivors. For others, the NGO may act as a paternal figure: intervene when problem appears, support in legal procedure. We see both types of relationship and sometimes NGOs tend to stronger in one than the other. This depends on leadership, identity and the ideology of the organization concerned. Reflects in their strategy, staff, terms of reference, in the psychological contract between the survivor and service provider, which forms mutual expectations and limits thereof.

## SOCIAL OR/AND SELF-STIGMA

Social stigma is relatively common either because the community suspects that the survivor was in prostitution, which means that some people are aware of trafficking even though they do not

necessarily take part in the trafficking. 5 out of 7 participants – who went back home - reported social stigma towards them directly or towards other members in their family: their children, mother and other members. Social stigma acts as a reminder and prevents the person from finding security and sense of safety needed in the rehabilitation process.

> Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh) described the social stigma she faced from people in her community, after her return: 'Well *the people of my village cannot give me anything but they have always been criticising me for being in India… they do have a negative idea of me now. They think I am a bad girl and I do bad things. Local people always look for a chance to find my fault and they create trouble if they find me going out with someone or visiting any place with any male. They even write on the walls of my area about my bad nature and wrong doings if they suspect that I am again back in to sex work. I have been marked forever there is nothing I can do about it now'.* Dipti claimed to be indifferent to other people's opinion and that is the way she coped with social stigma. Nonetheless, the pressure was there and it might prevent her from having a partner, someone to marry when she would be ready for it. From the case narrative and researcher's feedback it appeared that Dipti's mother may have been a sex worker as well. Hence the stigma getting reflected in her responses were cumulative and could lead her back to prostitution. It was not clear whether Dipti had asked for help from NGO to deal with stigma though she mentioned that if the community could be made aware of what is trafficking it might be useful for girls like her. Manifestation of stigma could be in the form of bullying and exclusion that requires intervention.

> Pori (27 years old, Bangladesh) faced social stigma from other parents through her daughters: *'Parents of other girls in my daughter's school talk about me and point their fingers at my daughters; tries to keep their children away from my daughters, saying a lot of bad things about my life in India. They also sometimes use dirty words like "whore" and it is also very humiliating for them'.* Pori did her best to avoid stigma affecting her daughters, but without any husband, she felt more vulnerable. When Pori says she felt vulnerable without any husband, it could be an indication of being a step closer to being accepted into the fold of a normative society. A husband, in Pori's mind could have meant a moral sanctity, not necessarily just for conjugal reasons. However Pori's efforts were all self-directed. She usually refrained from confronting, usually gave in and was hopeful that things would improve someday. Pori also mentioned that she felt more courageous and confident. However Pori's mental health assessment scores suggest that her coping methods are not helping her deal with her psychological distress. Pori scored 13 out of 20 on SRQ20 test. This was in the high range and her responses were an indication that she might be diagnosed with depression on further testing. Her PTSD score of 51 was also way above the cut-off of 33. Her responses indicated presence of all three symptoms – intrusion, avoidance and hyperarousal. This meant that though on the surface Pori appeared to be living a functional life, there was an entire layer of dysfunctionality that remained untended.

While social stigma is often reported in studies on survivors of sex-trafficking, self-stigma is also overriding. 6 participants reported self-stigma.

> As for Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh), she anticipated that she would be socially

discriminated against: '*It is also true that I have lost the most precious thing in a woman's' life [and she refers to her chastity, equates it with her honour, Ed]. What else is left in me? Maybe I was a child and had nothing to do with what has happened to me but I have lost something that is so precious for a girl to be happily married and live a respectful life'.*

About the view people from her village would have about her, Amal (20 years old, Bangladesh) narrated: '*but they would, and in fact must have known already. And they will ask me many questions. And they will not accept whatever response I give them, they will talk and think whatever they feel like'.* That is one of her biggest worry: '*I am wondering how will I show my face once I get back home'* [showing face or not showing face is a sign of honour or dishonour – equivalent to losing face, Ed.].

While she was still in a shelter home, Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) projected onto her family her worries from thinking about her future meeting with them: '*they may be thinking about two things: one is why she is there? And maybe she was caught doing "bad" work. I have already told them that because I did not have passport, that's why I am here but they may or may not believe me. Also my neighbours will definitely think that I was doing bad work in Mumbai. In their mind Mumbai means only bad. But Mumbai has good work also'.* It sounds that she might handle social stigma quite well. Moreover, she planned to marry her boyfriend whom she met in India and come back to India.

On the contrary social stigma did not get reflected in the narratives of the women who have remained in the red light area. Jamila (35 years old, Bangladesh) lived in the outskirts of Kolkata, in a residential area and she went to a red light district in Kolkata for sex work. Her working life was totally separated from her personal life. She appeared to be socially integrated in her neighbourhood and she had one male friend that she met only in the red light area. The split between her two worlds seemed to help her avoid confronting people's judgment about her.

 Rahini (45 years old, Bangladesh) lived in a RLA of Kolkata, where she owned a liquor shop, and sold alcohol to clients and sex workers. For her, avoidance of social differences that might exist outside the RLA prevented her from facing social stigma. She avoided any interface with the world outside the red light area. Even in the course of this research, she did not participate in any of the consultative and common meetings held for this research despite wanting to participate.  In case of women who remained in the RLA, there was a kind of compartmentalization that protected them from being targeted by others. It wasn't very clear whether they experienced self-stigma or stigma from their families. Based on their poor mental health scores, it can be speculated that there was some cause for distress that could be stigma related, not necessarily social, and maybe self or anticipated that could explain their high stress levels.

Overall it appeared that survivors faced social stigma, and they also sometimes faced family stigma. Either by oppression when the participant was forbidden to leave her home as much as possible or by harassment when a family member intentionally made a reference to her life in exploitation or made some propositions. For the participants, it was indecent, inappropriate and emotionally painful.

It is not known how much the stigma hindered, slowed down and/ or even prevented the recovery process but one could infer that participants redoubled their efforts to avoid situations, people and

to build strategy to deal with stigma. This was not without a price even though they might find a way to retort when being shamed that they had skills which were resourceful. The other mechanism that they commonly used was choosing to bear with it and bear with the exhortation patiently.

## PROSECUTE OR NOT TO PROSECUTE?

The issues of prosecution and conviction are often equated with justice being served for the survivor though in reality the essence of justice encompasses much more than the final conviction of the trafficker. In case of survivors contacted through Rights Jessore in Bangladesh, it was an important aspect of their rehabilitation service package since the NGO actively advocates and creates enabling environment for survivors to prosecute traffickers. All 7 participants who returned home had filed a case against at least one trafficker and Sairah and Smriti who were still in the shelter home in Mumbai had planned of doing it.

Siyana, Jamila and Rahini had not shown any inclination to prosecute their traffickers, while Amal did not answer this question. While only Sapana had filed a case against her brothel manager.

For the ones who filed a case, with the support from their family and the NGO, they have maintained their complaint even when traffickers threatened them, when police pressured them and when traffickers were released and wandered around looking for opportunities to traffic other victims. In that context what did justice mean for survivors?

Their earlier experiences of betrayal made it difficult for them to trust anyone. And this mistrust then expands towards almost everyone around them. Or one of the impact of the betrayal is that they lose their ability to discern between who can be trusted and who cannot be.

Mistrust in the world prevents them from trusting anyone. In most cases, support from NGOs and/or family is crucial to ensure their feeling of safety and sustain their will to prosecute the perpetrators. Basically they trust the one they believe knows the system.

> For Sapana (20 years old, Nepal), justice for survivors - means to get the necessary support to file the case: *'if I am going to file the case (against the trafficker, ED.)if I do not get any support for doing so then that is not justice for me… but that time, if I get support to file the case then that is justice for me'*.

The need for revenge seemed to act as a motivation for survivors.

> Mou (22 years old, Bangladesh) wished the trafficker suffered as much as they made her suffer: *'I want them to suffer, what I have not gone through I shall make them go through that kind of painful experiences. I want them to feel the pain that they made me suffer. They should suffer as they took away me from my mother so that they will not dare to make anyone else suffer like this ever again and would understand if any one does any harmful thing to someone that person himself also has to suffer. Is not that true?'*

The sense of justice for survivors and for themselves is rather contextual. Depending on the state of rehabilitation they may give a different sense to what justice meant.

> For Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) justice for survivors meant rescue of girls from

exploitation: *'girls who are still in the brothels, need to be taken out and rehabilitated and returned to their parents'*. For herself, justice meant to get the necessary support upon return: *'like I have been kept here and now that I am being sent home. I need some help to be self-sufficient. Over here I learnt something about what is good and what is bad'*. Sairah had planned to file a case against trafficker in order to stop him from trafficking other girls: *'once I go back I will trace him back and ensure that he does not destroy other people's lives'*. Revenge against traffickers and feeling of empathy towards other potential victims were interrelated and also included in the concept of justice was being supported – rehabilitated, violations that may have occurred against her corrected or at least compensated. So we see how the idea of justice expands beyond prosecution of the trafficker, but takes on a more social and psychological identity.

Moreover, there are several reasons for which traffickers are not prosecuted. Survivors do not always remember faces, names and therefore they think they cannot prosecute the person. Also, lack of information about the criminal justice system may prevent them from prosecuting traffickers or postpone the prosecution. Sometimes, guilt may prevent them from prosecuting anyone involved in their trafficking.

Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) will not file a case as she thought it would be no use even though she thought that *'pimps should be punished, at least one pimp should be punished so severely that others are afraid'.* She did not require justice for herself as she did not believe she was trafficked as she was not duped as per her belief. She could see no benefit from justice: *'what has happened, has happened. He has also done this for money. And even if I file a case, those days will not come back. What I have lost, is lost'*. Sadly, she felt hopeless and helpless and did not see a future for herself.

The story of Upasana (18 years old, Nepal) revealed the difficulties survivors faced while prosecuting traffickers. Her mother filed a case against traffickers before she came back to her country: '*I have no idea about the case and thought that the trafficker will be out after some time even I file the case. Really I did not know and believe that trafficker may get such punishment. I had only the desire of revenge and wanted to kill him. After coming here (away from family) I got to know about the potential of getting the trafficker punished – information about law and how to punish. [After having gone back to Nepal she had extensive consultation with the NGO, Ed.] So I filed the case. At the time I was in the brothel, I usually thought that if I could not kill him he may again sell the girls'*. Being interviewed by the police may trigger past trauma and emotional burden, especially when they ask intimate questions – revealing lack of empathy and needs for capacity building. *'After filing a case, at first, it was very difficult. Nepali police was so bad, the police asked some question in the open place. They asked the question in such a manner which hurt me. Police asked the question even whether I enjoyed sexual intercourse. How many clients did you satisfy a day? Really such questions were not necessary to ask. After some time the behaviour of police gradually improved, they asked questions in more privacy'*. Both traffickers were arrested and were sentenced to 16 years of imprisonment for one and less for the second one. In Upasana's opinion justice meant: *'punishment for the trafficker… the process of making survivors mentally, physically and economically sound is really justice for*

*a trafficking survivor. To provide shelter for short term and to support for that period is not the sustainable way and it is not justice for survivors'.* For herself it meant*: 'to give the punishment to those persons, who are involved in trafficking, who are running the brothel in India is justice for me. The lengthy process of arresting the perpetrators is not giving the justice to many survivors, which is not good. I think so'.*

## What is justice for survivors?

Survivors do not necessarily expect justice from the legal system. It requires an access to information about the legal system, education about victimization and empowerment. It requires time and appropriate support. Either they do not know what justice could bring like Amal (20 years old, Bangladesh): *'all those pimps should be punished… but I can't tell what kind'.* Or they do not see themselves as a victim like Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) who thinks that only girls who have been enrolled against their will should seek for justice.

Smriti (19 years old, Bangladesh) did not mention punishment against traffickers: *'for the girls who return back, need some work and to stop them from being abused by their families. I think if this can be done, justice will be done. But I don't think families will stop abusing them'.* Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) did not talk about justice for herself but according to her: *'girls who are still in the brothels, need to be taken out and rehabilitated and returned to their parents'.*

For the ones who referred to the legal system as a way to punish the traffickers and prevent trafficking, justice will allow some relief but partly as the sentence is never enough considering the prejudice. Upasana (18 years old, Nepal) wanted not just punishment for traffickers and abusers but also the same treatment for them as she had in the brothel: isolation, punishment, food deprivation. For Sapana (20 years old, Nepal), justice for survivors was the ability given to survivors to file a case against traffickers. Reshma (21 years old, Nepal) saw justice as a two way process for the survivor to be integrated in the society and death penalty for traffickers.

Justice meant a retribution for some and rehabilitation for everybody. The survivors living in shelter home, have talked about how incarceration of the victim was injustice. How not knowing when she would be going back home was injustice. Shaming and stigma was injustice once the survivor went back home because it would restrict their access to opportunities and services.

## What is trafficking for survivors?

13 survivors, 13 different definitions of trafficking. We kept this question for the end of the research process as we presumed that participation in the research would change their view about trafficking and understanding of the situation.

Amal (20 years old, Bangladesh) left home because she knew she could earn some money in Mumbai but she did not know about sex trade. Her definition of trafficking was about victims and profiteers: *'girls are taken out, sold off… make them do bad work [she used – Kharaap=bad and Kaaj=work, Ed] and the pimps or traffickers are getting money and becoming famous in the village as rich people'.*

Smriti (19 years old, Bangladesh) came to India with the idea of working as a domestic

worker. For her, reasons for trafficking are due to a lack of girls 'education, abuse within the family, lack of information about life abroad and tendency to trust people participating in trafficking: '*it starts with the family. In our country, many women have many children and if the government helps the women on family planning. I would say that trafficking starts when a girl is not allowed to study, let the girl study, let the girl attain her puberty, her youth, let her become at least 18 years of age and only after that get them married. Also don't abuse your daughters because when they are abused at home and then they go to the in laws house, they are already used to being abused. So please be aware that trafficking starts at home. When you send your child with someone, please be careful as to who are you sending her with, where are you sending her and for what you are sending her. You may know this person, even if you know this person for a few months or for a few years, it is not enough. They must be your relatives. Also when they say that they are bringing the girl to Kolkata, what kind of work are they talking about? Please find out. Ask other girls who have already transited from Bangladesh to India, what kind of work they are doing as also why have they made the transition? There are other work in Bangladesh, put your girls there. It is highly likely that they are being trafficked when you send them out with other people to another country*'. Finally, she recommends: '*I would caution people to not listen to sweet talkers or people who give you unrealistic hope and to not relate to people like that, because there is a danger of being trafficked*'.

Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) left home willingly with her husband to seek her father in Mumbai. Then she accepted to join sex trade to pay her debt back as her husband could not work as he could not speak Hindi. The most important comment she makes is: '*I wanted to save us both, but only he survived, I did not*'. Her husband was against the choice she made, he left after two months and she stayed behind. It seems that she wishes to live with this illusion or delusion that her husband was indeed a very loving man and who was completely innocent and she does not see how in the name of saving him, she has put herself in danger. Therefore, her definition of trafficking is the way: '*people entice women by lying or by giving false promise and then deceive them*'. This actually means that in her case, she feels, lying and deception as trafficking and not as manipulation.

About child trafficking, Rahini (45 years old, Bangladesh) described how traffickers choose the girls, plan the enticement and the recruitment. Manipulation, patience, life opportunities and constraints, contribute towards convincing the girls to leave the villages. She has also made her cousin come to work as a sex worker for some days to earn money and help her while she was sick. She is not so comfortable about that and considers it as a no-choice situation. According to her, the reasons for sex trade lay in the fact that there is a demand from men for several reasons. She talks about it as it is unavoidable. The only way to end trafficking is to stop it at the border as she believes trafficked persons can't be saved after they cross the border. So in case of Rahini, the most important element in trafficking was illegal migration, which according to her was core vulnerability.

According to Mou (22 years old, Bangladesh), cases of women being sold by their husband is quite common. Child isolated from her family is at a greater risk family is more at risk. She still considers the family unit as a system of protection. The family cell is still considered as

a protection notwithstanding the fact that they can be in danger in their own family environment.

For Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh), trafficking starts at the border where traffickers target some villages, some families, and some girls, they marry them and sell them. Therefore Dipti externalized the vulnerability and associated it with a trafficker who was an outsider.

For Pori (27 years old, Bangladesh), some girls are targeted because they could be responsive to any offer linked with jobs, money, etc. poverty is not a cause as any girl could be tempted to 'get more'. Through promises of marriage, girls can be trafficked as well. Pori recommends to not trust, not follow people with bad intentions, and not believe in whatever they are offered. Parents should be more careful with potential son-in law; they should be more informed. She says it is not inadequacy it is the aspiration of wanting more that is used as a lure by the trafficker.

For Ranu (24 years old, Bangladesh), reasons for trafficking are: lack of care within the family and lack of financial support are the main factors but not the only ones. Lack of protection tempted girls to leave their homes. Moreover, husbands traffic their wives as well; they become emotionally vulnerable and they fall prey to trafficking. Restriction from the family and the community can lead the girl to look for a better place elsewhere. Ranu recommends support during rescue and identification should be far more important than taking an opportunity to escape while on the way to RLA as it is impossible when they are in RLA.

Upasana (18 years old, Nepal) was trafficked because of poverty and as a result she was looking to fulfilling her desires for education. She thought she could be trafficked again only if she was kidnapped (taken against her wishes) or if she trusted some people. According to her, her family was responsible for her trafficking: lack of protection, inability to respond to basic needs, neglect and abuse in the family were reasons. To prevent trafficking, one should work on the causes: '*There are so many cases, who are being trafficked who are not able to fulfil basic food, who are Lower caste people, who are facing domestic violence and who are abandoned from the home. Some may know about the trafficking but to fulfil their basic necessity they may get trafficked*'.

Upasana was talking about elements of structural discrimination. According to her poverty was a product of discrimination based on caste, class and gender, which actually created the vulnerability at the societal level and resulted into personal vulnerabilities for a trafficked victim.

Sapana (20 years old, Nepal) did not have proper guidance; peer influence and trust in strangers led her to trafficking. Age of the girls, from different social background is the main reason for trafficking. She thinks parents should be taught on how to protect their children from trafficking. Getting more information about the situation in faraway places, to not trust unconditionally while sending girls out would help to prevent trafficking.

Reshma (21 years old, Nepal) was trafficked because she could not fulfil her desires for education, happiness and food. According to her: *'Trafficking is not necessary to be sold in*

*brothel but from the village to Kathmandu, there can be trafficking. It is to make others work without payment but I felt before that it was to make others work in bad things'.* She suggests conducting awareness programmes and educational programmes on child care practices and child protection for parents and future parents.

For Jamila (35 years old, Bangladesh), trafficking is represented by the trafficker she met when she was a community guard.

Therefore from the different constructions of trafficking we observed events that the girls viewed as the most critical and leading to their being trafficked. Some begin with the family and personal aspirations; some go deeper into structural discrimination. In the family they talk about deprivation, neglect, abuse and violence. Then we see that some girls talked about the point at which they met the trafficker or when the trafficker entered the village – getting to know the trafficker – that entire phase till realizing that they had been betrayed. Together all that is defined concurs with the legal definition of trafficking. The only point of departure from the legal definition is that in the definitions given by the survivors, they see themselves playing a very important role. Their own aspirations, their trusting nature, their ignorance, their need for basic amenities, their lack of protection – these are all seen as reasons that led them to trafficking. Absent was the manipulations or the wantonness of a trafficker's intention in luring the girls on the basis of their vulnerabilities. Does this mean that the survivors saw their own circumstances as the main reason for their trafficking? Does this mean that according to them, the trafficker was incidental in their trajectory to perdition? Not questioning the manipulative intentions and profiteering motivations of a trafficker could either be a reflection of the deep-seated impact of patriarchal values that blame the woman who violates norms or it could be rejection of the identity of a trafficking victim. In either case, it raises important questions for people designing rehabilitation services, to be able to align services with loss, to define loss from a survivor's perspective and not from an outsider's stance.

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY: HOW TO RECONCILE PAST AND PRESENT LIFE?

The post-rescue period is not like coming from one world to another world. Some participants had built relationships in the brothel, some were harassed by the trafficker, some could see the trafficker going around their place, and some were restricted to live in a shelter home. Pre rescue and post rescue were not a clear demarcations for her. Psychologically she is unable to clearly cut off. This occurs when she is inducted into the brothel, wherein she misses or draws comparisons with her family and now she remembers her relationships/life in the brothel and draws comparisons thereof. Until one resolves the past and present she is constantly stuck in the stress between the past and the present. This is the biggest obstruction to take any agentic view – of choosing what she wants for herself – take decisions.

Will to keep relationships and inconvenient reminders of past experiences link the past to their present and may prevent them from building their future life. Time and proper psychosocial support will enable the healing of inner wounds as well as outer sores. Several steps to recovery must be in place. Amongst them clarifying family role, finding a feeling of safety in order to build trust again and allowing oneself newer opportunities that could be both empowering and liberating seem to

play important roles.

In order to find their place in the society again, their family role has to change. It will be either initiated from within the family or by the survivor. The survivor may comply with the new set of rules or decide to leave again. Since they have already experienced the unknown leaving home is no more a challenge for them. If they feel they do not belong to their family or the level of acceptance is below their need, they may make the decision to leave. Therefore, the period of initial adjustment upon reintegration and integration is very crucial.

Quality of services, especially through counselling and therapy plays an important role in integrating her confusions and dilemmas. At this stage her resilience will depend on her ability to integrate, not necessarily identify who is to be blamed or otherwise. Her deprivation, violence, abuse and overall strengths and vulnerabilities need to make sense for her.

For those women who have lived with insecurity, threats, violence, rediscovering the feeling of safety is crucial. At some point they have thought about committing suicide, their psychological integrity has been threatened, they have endured extreme physical pain, and their world has collapsed. Building trust again is a necessary challenge faced by most participants. Socializing with family, friends, and community members may take some time especially when interpersonal sensitivity is high and trigger negative reactions that affect interpersonal behaviours (Nickerson, Priebe, Bryant & Morina, 2014). In fact, repeated interpersonal trauma affects the capacity to trust other persons and therefore her social functioning.

> As often encountered with survivors of trauma, Mou's (22 years old, Bangladesh) trust in the world and others had been impaired: *'I don't trust anyone, whoever you trust will hurt you, leave you in trouble. I have come to this world alone and shall leave alone I don't need any one. They won't take my responsibilities. You know sister, I can talk to people as not all are bad but trusting them for being close with me is not possible for me…'* She has become more assertive: *'I don't even give them any importance and I am no longer a stupid person who would have trust someone like that fraud and that's why I suffered. Now I don't trust anyone, I don't show any pride but yet don't give in to any of the men's offer or proposals and now need to earn some money for myself and my daughter'.*

After being trafficked and rescued, they may feel empowered having faced adversity and survived. At this point it is important to note that outsider's expectations from a survivor to become empowered, knowing own rights and claiming them might become another form of oppression until a basic level of recovery and healing has been achieved.

Resilience will be marked by having a life-plan, a gainful engagement, goal directedness and, wishes to change their life. The experience of trafficking places them all at a new stage in their life in which a resilient pathway is one in which they feel they are empowered to make decisions and that only positive changes in their life will make the difference. The autonomy that emerged out of neglect can become empowering if they are allowed safe means of becoming independent.

Even though they have faced the same experience of trafficking, their stories remain very personal. At individual level, each survivor had managed to deal with the situations but each of them had

sustained it in a different way. The recovery process will not only depend only on their past experiences but also on the psychosocial support they will be provided upon return. As studies show, social support mitigate negative psychological impact of trauma (Robinaugh et al., 2011) (Klarić et al., 2008) their perception of social support from family, from social acceptance, from friendships and intimate relationships become precious for their rehabilitation.

The capacity to make life choices in different domains becomes tremendously important for them. It is a way of gaining control again over their lives. Incidentally, they all look for self-sufficiency. Having survived a situation where they have been confined, oppressed, subjected to surveillance and controlled, where their intimacy has been wounded and they have been made to feel helpless has brought a need to rely on themselves for want of anything better.

Therefore, education and work, relationships with commitment may become a priority as it is expected to bring information, economic independence and help her regain her lost status in the society and in her own mind. Here it is important to note that resilience may not have a linear relationship with work or education, but will depend on what her engagement or present form of existence means to herself. She may be living in penury, but being able to care for her child may be more protective for her than getting a job that doesn't allow her to perform her duties of a mother.

Finally, the opportunity to choose to disclose to the family circle seems to play a role in the recovery process. 5 out of 7 participants living in Bangladesh and Nepal have disclosed their story to their family, at least their mothers and one relative. Disclosure is a timely process and respecting their privacy and safety is highly important for their recovery process. Forced disclosure would bring further harm, pain and worries to the survivor. At times survivors might refuse services out of fear of disclosure in the community. This fear needs to be respected and services need to be designed in such a way that it enables them to attain it without forced disclosure.

At group level, the identification to a social group, the sense of belonging to a peer-group seems to be crucial. The experience of the Nepalese participants show that the support provided by the NGO was beneficial at different levels: they became aware that other girls had been through the same experience and had survived it. The 3 participants still lived with other survivors and had frequent contacts with the NGO. In that case, the NGO had substituted the family, recreating a safe space with a family like environment. Besides, group-based coping strategies are known to be more effective for survivors.

## FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Due to our interest in knowing what the participants felt and thought during the research process we sought their feedback through a questionnaire. We tend to believe that this feedback was genuine and least affected by response bias as it had both positive and negative responses and also insights into their sexual life. Their feedback has been summarized below.

## A safe space to share and express

All participants have found benefit from this research as it gave them an opportunity to share their experience, their pain, and their feelings. The research created a space in which they found someone to listen to their story, someone to receive their emotions, someone who did not judge them and someone who cared about their feelings. They found someone they could trust and feel safe with. It sounds like the research process acted as a therapeutic release.

## Reflexive and insightful

The research gave an opportunity to reflect on past experiences; it provided new perspectives about their life, a new meaning, as well as internal personal changes.

> Dipti (17 years old, Bangladesh) was grateful she had the opportunity to participate in the research: *'You know in a way I feel blessed about my life as unless I had gone through all that I had to go through I would not have met with people like you and would have never had any idea about so many things about my life and I now think about my life differently'*. Dipti benefited positively from the research process: 'the *way I have learnt to think about my life in the past few months I feel stronger I feel like I can work for others and shall be able to do something good in my life. There will be people who will still look down upon me and my mother yet I shall be able to lead a good life'*. She experienced some changes in herself: *'I do feel stronger now as I have been able to identify my abilities. I never thought about myself like this before. I never thought about my rights and security/safety. I have been able to identify what are the things I am capable of'*.

> Siyana (20 years old, Bangladesh) found a listener and it helped her to give some meaning to her experiences: *'it helped me understand many things; that you are listening to our stories for our good. Girls who don't know tell us to not talk about our lives and ask us what use it will have. I tell them that the people who are doing the research, they know the objective and I like talking to them…* She could reflect on her own experiences and this changed her attitude: *'I have learnt how to save one human being; that I am not motivated by anger, by being caught like some other girls. I am not saying that I will come back here again and will do this work again. All these discussions that we are having with you and others in this process, taught me that this work is not good. I also learnt how to behave well with others and how to present myself to others…'*she could understand herself better: '*I felt a little sad when I went back, but I also realised what was good and what was not very good. When I looked back, I realised that when I was with my parents or with my grandmother, I was different and now this is me, who is here is different'*.

## Trauma related growth

Traumatic experiences do immense harm, but within such harm, researchers have identified that survivors also experience growth. This can be in the form of better ability to deal with stress, improved interpersonal skills, greater resilience and a sense of achievement akin to heroism that has positive effects on self-esteem. This growth process also helps them deal with self-blaming, shaming and guilt. When cognitive appraisals are achieved in post-traumatic phases, it can lead to changes in world-views, like discarding an old frame of reference and adopting a new one and feeling confident about oneself. Such growth also impacts a survivor's ability to advocate for her own rights and rise from a passive victimhood to an active right holder. However presence of trauma related growth does not mean that the survivor is not suffering, it does not negate her vulnerabilities, rather it indicates strengths that can be built further to heal. Similar aspects of trauma related growth were observed in their feedback as well.

For example Smriti (19 years old, Bangladesh), experienced positive changes: *'after getting into the RLA, my spirit has broken down but after going through this research I feel much better and much rejuvenated. I have learnt a lot from this, that life is too long and it does not end here… I have learnt a lot from these exercise and the amount that I have learnt from you personally, I have not learnt from anyone else before in my life'.* Smriti learned from the research what she has not learnt before that is usually taught during childhood: the difference between good and bad. She said: *'after talking to you people, I have started recognising and differentiating between good and bad. And because now I can recognise good, the bad seems to stand out in contrast'.* The research has alleviated guilt: *'earlier I used to think that it was my fault that I am here but today I believe that I was trafficked without my consent. Earlier I used to think that I was nothing, I wanted to die, but during the process of the interviews, I learnt that I am also a human being and that I too deserve a healthy and good life'.* Furthermore: *'the best part is that I have someone who listens to me, you helped me and taught me about life, you asked me about life, my health, my emotions, my feelings, things that no one has asked before. Plus I have learnt many things from you. When people are suffering and if they can't share that with anyone, they feel terrible but if they are able to share that with someone, then they feel better'.*

Sairah (23 years old, Bangladesh) benefited from the research as she learnt about herself and about others as well. '*I have learnt that whatever has happened with me, it should not happen with any other girls. Then I have learnt how to connect back with your family and how to have harmonious relationships or at least an adjusting relationship with one's parents'.* She felt confident about herself: *'how to protect myself, how to adjust to environment, how to talk to other people, how to explain and talk to other people'.*

## Researcher's effect

The research was an opportunity to meet with the researcher, a person who was not from 'their world' and someone who was empathetic and wanting to listen to them. The meeting with a researcher was a chance to find some relief throughout the interviews.

Rahini (45 years old, Bangladesh) participated in the research, as she was curious to know a person who was interested in them. The interviews were cathartic for her: '*but I have also felt while talking to you that these painful memories are from my past…they are all gone and I will never, never go through them again in this lifetime*'. She would have preferred to have more time dedicated to the interviews. She sang several times and the songs were a tribute to friendship and to a friend she has found in the researcher.

Pori (27 years old, Bangladesh) gave a positive feedback about the research process and the researcher. She was glad she found an opportunity to discuss about her life the way it was proposed to her. She felt safe with the researcher and that helped her share about her experiences in Mumbai. She felt lighter than six months ago. Even though it was not the objective, she could experience catharsis: '*I think my life was full of trauma and bad things but now a days I see some meanings in my life. Now I find some hope*'.

Ranu (24 years old, Bangladesh) appreciated the attitude of the researcher: '*mainly I liked talking about my life history, the pains and frustrations and I liked sharing all these with you. I liked the way you approached with your questions and your attitudes and behaviour towards me*'.

Amal (20 years old, Bangladesh) had learnt about her self-image and her role within her family. She felt she had found a mother in the researcher: '*I really liked talking to you, I could share my pathos with you just like I could have shared them with my mother*'.

### Talking painful experiences, dealing with painful memories

Any research on post traumatic experiences, would inadvertently kindle memories of the traumatic. This research was designed with great care to create a space that was safe and secure, even empowering for the participants to share their experiences with the researcher. However talking about pain and revisiting the traumatic can be difficult as expressed by some participants.

Upasana (18 years old, Nepal) appreciated the overall research process and most of the exercises as she felt comfortable to express her feelings and could answer the questions. But talking about past experiences was difficult. From her feedback, it shows that it is important to reflect on actual situation in light of the past: '*85% was good. I can easily express my feeling, not difficult to answer the question. The question was good because we also participated in the questionnaire making process so I felt it is good research. !5 % was bad. It was too difficult to think while doing the Johari window and when we talked about the past then it was too difficult for me. Though it was positive because even if I had to think, I came to know that I can assess myself in the recovery star. Also in Johari window, it gave me opportunity to know what the society knows about me and what they do not know. Also, it gave me the opportunity to draw and assess support*'.

Sapana (20 years old, Nepal) reflected on the process and its length: '*I like this research. We talked from birth till now… we talked about happiness and problems. When we talked about problems, I felt bad but sometimes I enjoyed a lot. It is fine. I didn't find it boring even though it wasn't for one or two months but went on for six months…I also didn't feel like not sharing.*'

## Behavioural changes from the beginning of the research to its end

This study also investigated behavioural changes throughout the research process with the **2-test behavioural assessment**. The questions explored their awareness of own behaviour and behaviour of others. The difference between the baseline and the end-line test was positive for 7 of the participants. The result was negative for 5 participants. For Reshma and Sapana the variance was as low as 0 and 1 respective. Amal experienced most negative changes by the end of the research process. Her variance was -
14.5. This meant that Amal perceived greater awareness of other's behaviour and her own behaviour before the research began and this reduced by the time the research ended. Same was true for Jamila, Pori, Ranu and Dipti. The only explanation that can make sense of this negative change is that perhaps, these participants had overestimated their levels of awareness at the beginning. Through the research process their ability to reflect and be more insightful increased, leading to a more genuine assessment of self.

Sairah reported an increase in 18 points in her awareness by the end of the research. The highest mean score for positive changes for the entire group was found on 'Being aware of your reactions to the behaviour of others' (+0.46), 'Being brief and concise' and 'The general level of your interpersonal skills' (+0.38). All other items were scored less than 0.31.

Items that were scored negatively were: 'Always explaining your disagreements', 'Being aware of how much you support others' (-0.38) and 'Being aware of the reactions of others to your behaviour' (-0.31).

Therefore, it can be said that participating in this research led to several insights, growths and changes. It highlights the usefulness of this procedure and merits replication, in either a form of a longitudinal research or by adapting it into rehabilitation programmes.

# INFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. PRE-TRAFFICKING VULNERABILITIES AND POINTS OF INTERVENTION

### A. Inferences

#### a. *Intersectionality of vulnerabilities*

Various vulnerabilities converged to form a spiral of situations that burdened a young girl's abilities to adapt and cope. The vulnerabilities were mainly centred on decay of family in the form of abandonment by father due to migration or second marriage, which in turn led to loss of income, burden of parenting being placed on mother and loss of status in the community. When father abandoned a family due to migration or second marriage, accompanying stress included domestic violence, mother's emotional distancing from her children caused because of her adequate lack of expression of grief on being abandoned. In some cases the mother was emotionally not available and also physically, when she escaped her stresses and either remarried or migrated for work. Overall we identified a very loose and deficient nature of relationship within the family of a girl who got trafficked.

#### b. *Married children*

Amongst this crumbling family system the girl appeared to be alone and unsupported. Poverty induced by such abandonment forced the girls to take on adult roles of being her own provider and at times also taking care of others. One form of intervention by the family at this stage was to get these girls married off at the earliest. This was the primary and extended family's way of trying to ensure that the girl gets taken care of by someone else. That she no longer remains their liability. Such married children were rather invisible for her own family, who treated her marriage as the end of their responsibility as well as invisible to program links that were meant for either children or women. Even after being married the cycle of violence followed these girls resulting into domestic violence and abuse from the marital family. As we saw the girl had very few resources of her own, in terms of financial as well as social. No expectations of being protected by either her natal family or the state were reported by the girls, when they were subjected to abuse in their marital homes. Overall there seemed to be a tolerance of multiple forms of violence on women in family and community and very little brush with law enforcement or community support.

### c. *Lack of safety networks*

This revealed an extremely fragile emotional and social infrastructure that failed to step-in to compensate for the loss of family care despite being an agrarian community. There was no mention of any social welfare services either for these abandoned children. The girl was left feeling that she was her only resource a sense of orphan hood set in. What was common for all the girls was an absence of financial security that necessitated actions for basic survival. The amalgamative effect of these developments in her life led to a point in which she felt that she was ready to take risks for something better. What we observed was a feeling of agency and autonomy that got created due to her situation that spurred her to seek out of the downward spiral. In that sense her moving out was a very engaged form of coping with the adversities engulfing her very young life.

Therefore this research challenges the idea that trauma begins only after trafficking. The narratives showed that there was presence of significant trauma even in their pre-trafficking contexts. However it needs to be noted that similar types of traumatic intersectionality could have multiple finalities. That is children may cope in different ways with the same types of traumatic exposure. It may well be speculated that some may leave home without waiting for a trafficking to lure them away. In other cases it could lead to depression or other forms of maladaptive behaviour. These traumatic events are not linearly correlated with trafficking – they need not always end in trafficking. For trafficking to occur the entry of a trafficker is necessary, without that variable, trafficking cannot take place.

## B. Recommendations

### a. *Primary prevention – at the very beginning with the family before trafficking occurs*

The focus on missing children can be immensely strengthened if primary prevention that safeguards a family and its ability to function to the fullest is made a priority. Identification of such families in distress and preventing risky migration of children from therein can be an effective way in reducing the risk of children leaving home.

Developing targeted interventions for single women headed families who have suffered abandonment and/or divorce due to polygamy and/or migration of male member. These targeted interventions should specifically look at emotional distress that children and their mothers may be going through and aim to provide livelihood opportunities.

Psychosocial interventions cannot be limited to counselling. Communities often have their own mechanisms of dealing with adversities and trauma. Encourage Community-Based Organisations (CBO) to develop strategies to address distress and trauma amongst children and their parents and mitigate barriers that prevent some family's access to community's

protection. Psychosocial interventions must be holistic and include employment for families and assistance for women who are suffering violence. This intervention has to be integrated within existing programs.

### b. *Primary prevention – focus on children rights and protection*

Prevention of child labour and child marriage and violence must also be targeted. If needed laws that help such children need to be reviewed. In recognition of their greater vulnerability to violence, married children require targeted interventions that specifically reach out to them. Conventional set of services may not work and would require customization. The same set of services could and should be applicable to returning survivors. Community mental health approach can be used by training CBO in basic skills of creating awareness, making referrals and garnering support for prevention of violence.

## 2. THE PROCESS OF BEING TRAFFICKED

### A. Inferences

### a. *Profile of a trafficker*

A trafficker can be anybody, someone closely related or a neighbour, a person who professes love or a concerned friend. What emerged from the narratives was that the girl placed some trust on the trafficker thinking the person was trying to help her either escape the adversities surrounding her, or achieve her dreams of education or better employment. The trafficker on the other hand seems to have identified their potential victims, mostly on the basis of their vulnerabilities that are easily identifiable such as – a pattern of married children, domestic violence, children abandoned by their parents, single headed – women headed family living in deprivation, orphaned children living with poor grandparents. The trafficker who first approached the victim was careful in building trust and appearing to be an ally and being able to manipulate the victim's susceptibility to attention and affection – both which her family failed to provide.

### b. *Neglect leading to autonomy*

The victim does not come into being only after being trafficked. What we saw in this research was that girls who were trafficked were victims of neglect, violence, abuse and abandonment even before being trafficked. The decision to accept the trafficker's proposition and migrate away from her homeland did not appear to be one that involved any significant other or a family member. Such autonomy was probably a result of realizing that she was her only means. However we need to note that this autonomy that results out of neglect cannot be seen as empowerment. The victim seems to choose survival over morality, especially in cases where the trafficker made the choice clear. In cases where she was not aware that she was being sold

into prostitution, she had agreed to accompany the trafficker in a false belief of a better life somewhere other than her pre-trafficked conditions of living.

### c. *Why did she not seek help in transit?*

There were several reasons why the victim did not seek help after realizing that she was being trafficked or while travelling out of her country in public transport. One, was the use of violence by the trafficking in the form of rape that placed some of the victims in a state of shock while being transported. Second, was the use of threat and intimidation which worked most effectively for victims who were afraid of being caught by law enforcement agencies and being sent back to the adverse conditions that they were trying to escape, third, was this fear of law enforcement agencies incarcerating them on the charges of illegal migration, especially true in the case of girls from Bangladesh. Fourthly, it appeared that though she may have perceived that something was wrong in choosing to let go of her morality for the sake of survival, the real implications or risks involved in prostitution never emerged in their narratives. It seemed that they were quite unaware of the risks or repetition of the pattern of pre- trafficking violence in a brothel before they entered it. Fifth, was that she may not be very trusting of the police to seek help even if she saw officers at border check posts. Finally the sixth reason appeared to be that of self-stigma. The choice of letting go of morality, the choice of migrating out and flouting several social norms binding a female in an agrarian patriarchal community, the choice of probably abandoning a child in the process of leaving home may be weighing on her, preventing her from trying to return back and face consequences of such violations.

Thus a web of reasons seemed to have held the victim back from seeking help during the transit between her home and the final destination. These inferences led us to recommendations on strategies that can be effective in intercepting trafficking, while in transit as discussed next.

## B. Recommendations

### a. *Specific awareness to increase vigilance, reporting missing child, seeking help in transit*

Awareness campaigns that publicize typical features of a trafficking situation need to be conducted to increase vigilance of general public and to make the already existing vigilance mechanism more effective. Vigilance is the basic way to identify trafficking in transit.

Another set of awareness need to be community focused and aimed at advertising signs that indicate that a child may have been trafficked need to be designed and propagated. Such campaigns need to be careful not to appear anti-migration, as the purpose is not to stall migration but to make families detect distress in migrated children.

Awareness of helplines or assistance mechanisms catering to rescuing trafficking victims need to be conducted. This need to be aimed at potential victims on the basis of their vulnerabilities to ensure they are aware of their rights and steps to take in case they fall into a perilous situation in a different country.

Along with creating awareness in people, the helpline numbers and some short directions on what to do in distress need to be advertised along railway routes and borders. A public-private partnership model can be used to design creative methods of publicity and awareness generation. The content of messaging though needs to be clear and steer clear of sounding anti-migration.

b. *Decriminalize the trafficking victim, strengthen her rights to protection*

At this point the chances of a trafficking victim seeking help during transit is very low. Short-term solutions to deal with the issue of self-stigma are also not available. However our inferences showed that traffickers take advantage of a vulnerable and emotionally malleable victim, who probably had no access to any safety networks or protective mechanisms by the State and community. Hence one way to intercepting a trafficker's plan to target such vulnerable groups would be to reinforce a girl/woman's right to seek help, even migrate, if she is in distress due to violence, abuse, abandonment and deprivation. The idea would be channelize the autonomy resulting from neglect into something that is positive and protective as against risky.

At the same time it is important to make efforts to decriminalize the trafficking victim. To create awareness of a trafficking victim's rights to protection and criminal justice in order to dispel the fears of incarceration if intercepted by law enforcers while being trafficked. This fear of being caught and put into prison or being sent back home which she was trying to escape in the first place acts as a major deterrent in her seeking help from police at various points during transit.

c. *Increase trust in the system*

If a victim of domestic violence, parental abandonment, poverty and abuse was in the process of leaving home to seek better employment and living opportunities elsewhere and realized in the process that she was being trafficked and if such a person sought help from the police during transit, what are the chances that she won't be sent back to the same conditions of distress that she was escaping? What are the mechanisms that would protect her against threats from traffickers once she is sent back home and participates in prosecuting her traffickers?

The period of transit and intercepting during transit is very volatile. If the system functions in a way that places the girl back in her vulnerable conditions after rescuing her during transit, it will appear as if the State was working against her. Therefore post-rescue – rehabilitation mechanisms need to be reviewed and designed to treat the core vulnerabilities and not the visible outcomes. By this we mean to draw attention to the difference between kidnapping a

child and trafficking a child. In the former, there is expectation of a ransom from the child's family. On the other hand when a child is trafficked or when a child/girl/woman engages in migration it tells a different story about her primary context. Intercepting trafficking during transit is a very sensitive issue as it is very difficult to distinguish it from migration, since there is no evidence of the victim being sold or exploited. Hence strategies of interception will need to treat the underlying reasons that led to illegal migration. This would be a long term solution, but one which might be very effective in building trust between the victim and the system.

## 3. EXPLOITATION, RESCUE AND ITS LINKS WITH REHABILITATION

### A. Inferences

#### a. *Exploitation system*

Once the victim reached the destination point and was sold to a brothel, her exploitation almost became systematised. The narratives revealed that every brothel or every girl seemed to have experienced a certain process of induction into sexual exploitation and payoffs. The process of induction was marked by instilling fear, creating disorientation, using violence and abuse and controlling every aspect of a victim's life. A common way was to inculcate a feeling in the victim that she had been bought by the brothel and thus she would have to repay the debt incurred in buying her to attain her freedom.

Another common way was to instil fear of authorities and law enforcement officers. The traffickers at destination points aimed at making the victim feel she was a criminal and that the brothel was protecting her from getting punished by the law. Amidst the exploitation, the narratives provided glimpses of privilege or incentives within the brothel, experienced by some girls.

Relationships were forged within the brothel, with the manager, with some mentor and with certain clients. Such relationships were useful for the victim while coping with the stress and trauma of being trafficked into sexual exploitation.

#### b. *Rescue*

Within the first three months survivors try to escape from the brothels. Some escaped on their own while others were rescued. However, there was evidence that there is a nexus between the police and the trafficking system. Two examples illustrated this very clearly. Dipti was taken back to her brothel manager (*Seth)* by the police after she had managed to escape on her own and Reshma ended up in prostitution again after the police was bribed while she was in a shelter home. These were examples of destination area. In case of Pori, the police in source area put pressure on the trafficker to bring her back, which ultimately happened. Smriti talked about her family having to bribe the police to bring her back, while she had already been

rescued and was in a shelter home.

The data therefore showed corruption in the police force, a nexus between traffickers and some police officers and failure of intelligence mechanisms. The rescue of Pori, especially showed that there was hardly any standard procedure of indicting the trafficker. This does not mean that all police officers were corrupt as the police had rescued some girls as well.

### c.  *Mental health*

Mental health tests revealed presence of PTSD and other symptoms of distress – anxiety, distrust, impaired social functioning, sleep disturbances and cognitive deficits. PTSD is a reaction to traumatic conditions. The presence of such symptoms signifies the traumatic nature of being trafficked and sexually exploited. Presence of these symptoms also signifies the need for psychological rehabilitation, which doesn't seem to be occurring. A trend was identified between lesser mental health problems among survivors who were receiving sustained counselling after being rehabilitated (girls who were integrated in Nepal). The findings showed that trafficking wasn't just a criminal justice problem but a health issue as well that requires due and urgent attention from the health sector.

### d.  *Rehabilitation*

The common course is to return the survivor to her family after conducting a home-study. This home- study report only hinges upon the family's willingness to have the girl back and fails to identify or reveal how the family will function once the survivor returns. What reasons were present for the girl to leave home remain unexplored and therefore none of the rehabilitation methods looked at family dysfunctionality. There is no scope in home study investigation to address the point of family's levels of distress.

One approach illustrated in case of Nepal was when the victim did not go back to the family, rebuilt her life in Kathmandu. In Bangladesh they went back and the difference lies in opportunity – life choices, stigma, and lack of NGO interventions. We know that families, which are marginal, have no support structure to help them cope with trauma. In cases where there is domestic violence, families experience certain abandonment from the community. Therefore the survivor returned to the spiral of vulnerabilities.

The NGO's limitation in providing services, to such girls who return to their families in different villages, is in proximity. Their services become variable in continuity and effectiveness of intervention. But it is not just that, it is also about approach – in Nepal the survivor experienced a service, which was with her and was supportive. NGO had support services, linkages to how she found a job, shelter, which assisted in reintegration. Such levels of intervention was not noticed in cases that returned home.

Next, rehabilitation is also not being seen in the light of recovery. If we look at trafficking as a form of harm and injury, then what is being commonly stated as psychosocial recovery, does not really take place. Methods of ensuring psychosocial recovery are very rudimentary. Similarly recovery is being judged by outward behaviour, her seeming ability to adjust, aggression becoming less, her quietening down, and not rebelling, eventually going back home and staying back home. Social workers, also see her outward reactions – behaviourally they do not show any dysfunction. They are maintaining relationships. In the layperson's eyes she is not 'mad'. She is not violent, beating up people, but is she rehabilitated, has she recovered from her trauma? Presence of mental health problems identified shows that she is in need of something more than what is being done.

## B. Recommendations

### a. *Missing Child Alert system – integrated rescue and rehabilitation mechanism*

Once a girl is trafficked, the only place to begin is at rescue. The missing child alert system needs to have very fast moving mechanism between law enforcement of Nepal, Bangladesh and India for early detection and rescue.

If the information were quickly passed between various types of police, the chances of being rescued would be very high. That Bangladesh police could pressurize the trafficker to bring back Pori and not take help from Indian police to ensure the trafficking network gets broken, shows the lack of any integrated mechanisms in practice.

Without an integrated system, prosecution is not possible as most often the trafficker gets out on bail due to lack of evidences and proof. The chain of trafficking remains unaltered, since prosecution and investigation is localized and therefore disjointed.

A task force is supposed to coordinate and collaborate to ensure speedy rescue as per an SOP between India and Bangladesh. Making this task force more accountable, smoothening communication and coordination between the three countries is needed. The integration should be such that if one agency falters, then the MCA should raise an automatic alarm for others to take notice and act as a regulation mechanism. When this accountability of the system becomes apparent it will increase trust between the survivor and the system. The difficulty in garnering support from the survivor in prosecution of traffickers will get addressed with this increase in trust.

### b. *Integrated case management approach*

Case management approach to identify needs and design services to meet them should be put into practice as soon as the victim gets rescued and placed in a shelter home. Case management must involve all aspects such as health, legal status, livelihood, protection and other basic needs. Ensuring that shelter homes are aligned with the MCA system will help in flow of information. The victim who feels victimized by being stuck in a shelter home without no

knowledge of when she will be able to go back to her country or why were the delays occurring, will be able to understand the way the system works. Case management will also ensure that services can be replicated or evolved as the survivor leaves a shelter home and gets reintegrated or integrated. The research has provided strong evidence for the need of continued services in the community. The interviews with the girls who were either living independently in the community or with their families have shown their struggle with stigma, lack of livelihoods and poor mental and physical health. Thus the assumption that recovery is complete upon release from shelter home or the idea that recovery and rehabilitation are separate processes must be discarded.

### c. *Not just returning her home, but enabling her home for her needs*

The whole experience and stress of this daughter coming back after disappearing for some time, coupled with stigma and shaming makes the family go through a different set of traumatic events and stress. The family may not have been an oppressor but also a victim. Or it may have been the oppressor and now the girl is placed back in the same quagmire. In this research we may not have interviewed the family, but it seemed that there was stress in the family after the girl's return, which remained unresolved. However the impact of her family's dysfunctions would affect her as well. Therefore it is important to work with the family. Rehabilitation cannot just focus on the girl, especially when there are evidences of pre-trafficking vulnerabilities in her primary context. Rehabilitation aimed at recovery must involve work independently with the family in addition to the survivor's rehabilitation.

### d. *Focus on recovery of health*

If symptoms of PTSD and other forms of psychological distress remain untreated then for her to find the energy for recovery is impossible. Post rescue testing should be institutionalized to measure the levels of trauma and then as an indication of recovery. Both physical and mental health indicators need to be measured right from rescue and must be continued till she receives rehabilitation services. Therefore health can become an indicator of recovery and effectiveness of rehabilitation. Testing for mental health problems can be modelled around the methodology used in the present research. In depth interviews, use of scales and projective techniques together will help generate data that can give a direction to rehabilitation needs of a survivor. As mentioned by one of the researcher who works as a counsellor, using this methodology had revealed several aspects of a survivors life that she had not encountered in the usual practice followed.

In order to ensure continuity of services, it is a good practice to appoint counsellors in any NGO involved in rehabilitation of survivors. The counsellors need to be trained to work with survivors of trafficking, to address issues of guilt and shame, self-blame and also help her integrate her experiences. It is important that the counsellors do not try to compartmentalize her experiences into good and bad, rather the survivor needs to be given a space to express herself without being judged. The focus should be on revelations, on building awareness of self, recovery from her trauma, helping her emotionally recognize the violation that she has undergone, violation and betrayal since she was a child following through to her exploitation and rescue.

To ensure that health gets a priority, funding services must be uninterrupted and adequate and community mental health approach that aims to train lay people to generate awareness and increase referrals must be utilized.

A module to work with trafficking survivors can be developed for knowledge transfer, the focus should be on better skills, better salaries that will attract more skilled people. We do understand activists or NGOs may not know how to integrate psychosocial services. So capacities will need to be built in NGOs. NGOs who provide at least minimum mental services must become an indication of qualification as an authorized service provider.

### e. *Capacity building*

Effectiveness of rehabilitation lies in the quality of support services to survivors after they have returned. Services in shelter home can never be assumed to be adequate to help her during reintegration and integration. However capacity to provide such services in the community are yet to be developed.

The area that lacks attention is that of health – leading to psychosocial recovery. This is largely because the workforce is very high on motivation, dedication, intent, but largely untrained. While trafficking has been seen as an issue of welfare and law enforcement, it has never been seen from an issue of health as any other victim of trauma. For example, in case of a natural disaster, domestic violence, rape, all these are seen as health issues, the responses include a concern for the victim's health. Understanding trafficking as injury to health and recovering from that is lacking in the present practice. The workforce needs to be geared up to provide rehabilitation services that aim at recovery.

Training is also needed to utilize a case management approach, to integrate psychosocial rehabilitation with welfare needs. Most of the services that trafficked survivors require are part of the general services – health, housing, livelihood, legal aid and so on. Thus what is needed is logistical additions that will create an enabling infrastructure for these survivors to receive and access appropriate services.

Incremental changes are needed to ensure that the workforce gets trained. An ongoing research by Change Mantras shows that between the typical cities known as destination and source areas there are around 70 service providers (NGOs) who need capacity building training, This is not an unmanageable number (Change Mantras is in the process of mapping service providers who give services to cross border trafficking) and can be achieved if planned.

### f. *Adopting a restorative approach, letting go of the custodian mind-set*

When rehabilitation is based on an assumption that trauma begins after trafficking, it fails to take into consideration contextual vulnerabilities that may have preceded the actual trafficking. The danger of such an assumption is in turning the entire process of rehabilitation into a custodian arrangement. Therefore, the state takes custody of the victim from the brothel, and then hands over her custody to her family. Where does the victim/survivor feature in this entire decision making?

A restorative approach on the other hand centres services on the survivor. Decisions are not made for the survivor, actions are not done to the survivors, and rather they are made with the survivor. The autonomy that developed out of neglect in a young girl, spurring her towards moving out and being her own means, runs the risk of being blunted and thwarted by the custodian approach. The same autonomy can be developed and made empowering by the restorative approach. Instead of inculcating submission and dependence or trying to control the survivor after she is rescued, rehabilitation must try to use her strengths and develop her agency. Her ability to be independent and resilient must not be lost in the process of 'handing her over' in somebody's care.

The best way to do this is to mobilize survivor's collectives. To create groups of survivors who can solve their problems collectively and gain support from each other. The approach of giving survivors an option to not go back to their families and live independently as observed in Nepal, is a good example of restorative practice. The option of not going back to the family will need alternatives that are not institution based. Close door shelter homes end up being oppressive and custodian. Instead open shelters and group living arrangements need to be explored. One restriction of such methods is that it can only be tried out in an urban setting, as a rural setting may not provide the necessary anonymity.

### g. *Interventions in Red Light Area*

This research also showed that all rehabilitation is limited to post rescue. What kinds of services are needed for communities who are still in prostitution? It is important to remember that in any RLA there will always be a percentage of women who may want retribution and mental health services, who may not be prepared today to be rescued but may change in future. We recommend that services for well- being and trauma management should not be conditional to her being rescued. It may not be direct. It can be in the form of an ECCD in the RLA. PLAN's ECCD principles can be applied for children born in RLA to ensure that the cycle of violence, exploitation may be intercepted at some point, to protect them from sexual exploitation and to strengthen their protective environment.

Also there is allusion to victims becoming perpetrators (Rahini's case narrative), which can be curtailed if RLAs are not ignored from rehabilitation services meant for trafficked victims. The IES-R and SRQ20 scores of both the participants from RLA were alarmingly high, highlighting their need for recovery even though they may not apparently be in any kind of 'bondage'.

## 4. MEANING OF JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

### A. Inferences

#### a. *Justice means compensation*

For survivors justice also meant being compensated for their sex work. Exploitation is not just in terms of sexual abuse of the victim but also not letting her partake into the earning from her sex work. However the whole element of compensation seems to be ignored in the case of trafficking for sexual exploitation, though it is not so when it is for labour trafficking. Therefore it appears that one needs to question what motivates the criminal justice system in defining justice for sex trafficking survivor just in terms of prosecution of the trafficker and exploiter and not include extraction of money earned by the survivor during her exploitation.

#### b. *Justice means not being deceived by service providers or the system*

While rescuing or after rescue the survivor is usually not explained the costs of rescue in terms of how many days it will take before she can return back home, or what would be her role in the prosecution system and what implications that may have on her safety. More emphasis or exclusive emphasis is given on benefits of being rescued. While this may be a necessity to ensure rescue, it is also deception. When the survivor gets stuck in the shelter home, though she was promised she would be able to return home, it creates a new sense of betrayal and frustration. The cycle of victimization thus continues even when the state believes it is now rehabilitating the survivor.

#### c. *Prosecuting the trafficker*

With support survivors are keen on prosecuting their traffickers, especially the ones who trafficked them from their homes. Very few are willing to prosecute their brothel managers. It appears that the intensity of betrayal and anger towards the person who gained their trust to manipulate and violate them is much more than the intensity of anger towards the exploiter. The role of a brothel manager is to exploit and thus probably the intensity of anger towards them is not as much as that towards the person who cheated them. Moreover, several survivors mentioned earning privileges and sharing an emotional connect with their brothel managers. The same cannot be said about the first procurer.

However though they may agree to prosecute the trafficker, even at the destination point, the lack of an integrated mechanism leads to delays. Such delays at times necessitate longer detention of the survivor in a shelter home to assist in prosecution, to record her statement against the destination point traffickers.

Being stuck in a shelter home and not being allowed to go back home as promised on rescue, leads to alienation in the survivor who ends up blaming the system in victimizing her further by curtailing her freedom and imposing control over her all over again in the shelter home. Very often this alienation leads to non-cooperation from the survivor in prosecution.

## B. Recommendations

### a. *Increasing transparency between the system and the survivor*

The survivor needs to feel that she is being taken seriously and not just being manipulated again to serve the state's purpose. Post-trafficking, while in exploitation, we have observed in our data, the survivor experiences trusting relationships with peers and some clients. However upon rescue the experiences are similar to being betrayed and controlled all over again. For example if she is given detention for 1 or 2 years, it needs to be mandatory that she needs to be explained the rationale for the duration of her detention.

When she is rescue, both costs and benefits of being rescued must be explained to her, instead of deceiving her and leaving her in a state of confusion and frustration with no information on future course of actions.

### b. *Increasing accountability of the system*

It is the right of a victim of trafficking to receive rehabilitation services from the state. Instead of treating rehabilitation as welfare, the state needs to consider it as the survivor's right and be accountable to her. Starting from the time of rescue, following into reintegration into her family or integration into a new community, the service providers need to be accountable for their actions. This must include compensating her for the time she spent in exploitative sex work. A system needs to be devised where in the survivors play active roles in planning, designing and evaluation of rehabilitation programs meant for them. Evaluation must be based on how much it has benefited the survivor. Survivor's collectives can conduct such evaluations as an independent group, not as part of another NGO. When the system works in her favour, when traffickers are prosecuted and corrupt police officers punished it will increase the community's faith in the system. This can in the long run derail the mechanism of fear of law enforcement used by traffickers to control victims in future.

### c. *Simplifying a survivor's participation in criminal justice system*

When a survivor is detained because she needs to depose for the state's case against the brothel, it appears oppressive to the survivor. Instead a good criminal justice system that works in favour of the survivor, keeping her rehabilitation interests in mind while achieving its own end of prosecuting the traffickers, would utilize provisions of video conferencing and creating logistical infrastructure that enables her to participate even after she is repatriated. Justice is part of rehabilitation and the plan or strategy of rehabilitation needs to include a survivor's role in the criminal justice system. Once the survivor and through her the community observes that

cooperating with the system leads to results, it will in future increase community participation in registering complaints against traffickers and in early detection of missing children.

## MORE QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES

Some results pertain to a minority of participants but seems to be relevant when studying trafficking. Even though they were not directly explored during this research, some topics have emerged and the analysis of this research has led to more questions that could be the basis for other qualitative research:

- It seems that the less the survivors participate in the decision making process the more they are inclined to prosecute traffickers. Would there be a link between this process of entry into trafficking and will to prosecute? What are the levels of implications of the potential victims and how could it be taken into consideration during the process of justice?

- It seems that the experience of neglect during childhood helps to handle the harsh living conditions in sex trade: the strategy of adjustment are more efficient for the girls who have been exposed to family violence as a child. Would trauma pre-exist to trafficking and lead to higher level of sensation seeking and risks taking? What is the level of resiliency prior to trafficking?

- Who are the traffickers?

- The survivors have resources that help them to build resilience and move on in life. However, where do they get the resources from, is not known. More study on survivor's resilience before and after trafficking would help to understand if resilience already exist before trafficking and participate in creating the will to make new experiences without recognizing traumatic experiences in childhood.

- When NGOS says that the girls are usually unable to provide information and details, it is because they are too emotionally consumed to remember or recall incidences. We have seen that respecting time and feeling of safeness is essential during the post-rescue period and the length of the process is individually-based. It would be worth it to study how survivors process cognitively their experience, the way they organize their discourse and how it affects the rehabilitation process.

# **CONCLUSION**

While a qualitative research allows exploring in-depth traumatic experiences of few individuals, this research gave the ground to other researches such as quantitative ones showing that researches are crucial to better understand the issue of missing children globally and to better identify suitable solutions to protect those children.

Trafficking is an epiphenomenon of poverty, lack of information, family neglect and abuse, climate change and multiple other factors, which tends to grow and expand rapidly. Migration, mobility and movements of populations know no boundaries. Borders are porous and they are gates to another destination, another destiny. This research would benefit from delving further into the issue of missing children from a human security perspective on transnational migration.

This research showed that family, brothel, and judicial are interlocked systems. The results question the roles and responsibilities at individual, family, local, national and international levels. Protecting children from their dreams is neither feasible nor desirable but untying the knots that keep those systems together is still possible.

Last but not least, this research gave the opportunity to participants to reflect on themselves; it has also implied that we reflect on ourselves… Their stories are unfinished stories. They talk about humanity as well as inhumanity and we all have to learn from them.

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# ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT

**LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH:**

**RESEARCH TITLE:** Qualitative Research on Survivors of Cross-border Trafficking

## BACKGROUND

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully, or you may ask the researcher to read this out to you. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear of if you need more information.

## PROCEDURE

You are invited to participate in a research on children who have been taken from Bangladesh or Nepal to India, and have been forced into exploitation. This research intends to help you and other children who have been into the same situation to better protect themselves and as a whole to better prevent child trafficking.

In this study, you will meet with one researcher during a face-to-face interview. During these meetings, the researcher will propose you to discuss about your life experiences through exercises, questionnaires and semi-directive interviews. Exercises are like games that will allow to identify your strengths and resources, the way you have dealt with positive and negatives changes in your life as well as the kind of social support you can rely on. Questionnaires will allow assessing your well-being as well as the benefit of your participation in this study.

## TIME COMMITMENT

The study will last from August 2013 till January 2014. The study takes about 2 hours per session across 6 sessions. The meeting will takes place once in a month according to the planning presented in Annex 1.

## PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

You are free to not answer any question that you find objectionable or which make you feel uncomfortable. You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.

If you decide to take part in this study, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. Nonetheless as the research design implies a development of different stages and a process is going on, you may be contacted by the researcher to understand the reasons of your resignation. In any case, it will not affect the relationship you have with the researcher.

You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/ destroyed.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

## BENEFITS AND RISKS

### Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, we hope that the information obtained from this study may help you understand yourself better, as well as people in your environment.

Participation in this study involves completion of some tests related to your mental health status and may reveal some difficulties that you may not be aware. Scores from these tests are not used for diagnostic purposes in this study. Though it is not possible to provide feedback of individual scores to participants, these scores might hint at health problems that some people would want to discuss with an appropriate health professional. If it happens then you will be given the opportunity to refer to a professional.

You may be invited to attend workshops and trainings held in India, Nepal or Bangladesh in the course of this research (in November2013 and/or in March 2014). From these workshops, you may learn from the research, about yourself and other survivors of trafficking, and about your opportunities and options that may help you to plan your future and make decisions for yourself better. You may also be more aware of how NGOs, governments and others can help you in your effort to seek better opportunities.

If you would like to have another family member/ guardian accompany you for these meetings or workshops that is also possible.

## Risks

There are no direct risks for you in this study. Nonetheless, the risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing personal information to others. The topics in the survey may also upset some respondents.

## COST, REIMBURSEMENT AND COMPENSATION

As no incentives will be given for participating in this research, you will not be paid for your contribution.

If there are any costs that will be incurred for you to participate in this research (travel from your home/shelter to the place of interview), the organisation that is conducting this research (Change Mantras) will bear the cost.

Change Mantras will bear costs for making of your passport and VISA (as well as your chaperone/ the person who will accompany you). All travel and boarding costs for these meetings will be borne by Change Mantras.

## CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data we collect contain some personal information about you. Personal information (name, address and any other information that may lead to identification of the respondent will not be used in any publication or final report and will remain confidential with Change Mantras. No one will link the data you provided to the identifying information you supplied. If information is meant to be used during conferences or published in journals, any information that could link the data to the participant will be removed.

Confidentiality will be protected. Reports of this study will aggregate interview data and will not discuss individual interviews.

Recording devices will be used in order to facilitate the communication between the participant and the researcher. Notes, interview transcriptions, and transcribed notes and any other identifying participant information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher. When no longer necessary for research, all materials will be destroyed. Each participant has the opportunity to obtain a transcribed copy of their interview. Participants should tell the researcher if a copy of the interview is desired

We will keep your responses confidential. Only the researcher will have access to this data. The researcher and the members of the researcher's committee will review the researcher's collected data. Information from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result from this study.

Research results will be presented at a conference and/or in an open access publication relevant to the digital library community. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. There are no foreseeable secondary uses of the data. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

Your signature below indicates that you understand these provisions around confidentiality and anonymity.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

…..………………………………..…… will be glad to answer your questions about this

study at any time. You may contact him/her at …………………………….……………..

**INFORMED LETTER OF CONSENT**

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

_____

Participant's Name (Printed)*

_____          _____

Participant's signature*                                        Date

_____          _____

Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)          Signature of person obtaining consent

*_Participants wishing to preserve some degree of anonymity may use their initials_

I am aware that participation in this study involves completion of some standardised tests [specify as relevant] which are routinely used as preliminary screens for clinical conditions/impairments of which I might not be aware. I understand that these assessments are not sufficient for diagnostic purposes, nor will they be used in this manner in this study. I also understand that the researchers cannot inform participants of individual test scores, but in the event that I produce scores of potential clinical concern, researchers should (check one and provide relevant contact information):

Contact me at: _____

Contact (name and phone number): _____

Do nothing. I absolve the researchers of any obligation to contact me

about this.

In order to participate in this research study, it is necessary that you give your informed consent. By signing this informed consent statement you are indicating that you understand the nature of the research study and your role in that research and that you agree to participate in the research. Please consider the following points before signing:

- I have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that I will be participating in the study called Qualitative research in survivors of cross- border trafficking. I understand that this means that I will be asked to answer some questions related to my life experiences.

- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time.

- I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

- I understand that my identity will not be linked with my data, and that all information I provide will remain confidential;

- I understand that I will be provided with an explanation of the research in which I participated and be given the name and telephone number of an individual to contact if I have questions about the research. In addition, I understand that I may contact ………………………………………….., if I have questions concerning my rights as a participant in psychological research or to report a research- related injury.

- I understand that certain facts about the study might be withheld from me, and the researchers might not, initially, tell me the true or full purpose of the study. However, the complete facts and true purpose of the study will be revealed to me at the completion of the study session; (If you are running a study involving deception, this clause is required.)

- I understand that participation in research is voluntary, and that, after any individual research project has begun, I may refuse to participate further without penalty.

By signing this form I am stating that I am over 18 years of age, and that I understand the above information and consent to participate in this study being conducted by Change Mantras.

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research:

Signature: _____   Date: _____

**Annex 1**

| Meetings | Date |
|---|---|
| 1st meeting | |
| 2nd meeting | |
| 3rd meeting | |
| 4th meeting | |
| 5th meeting | |
| 6th meeting | |

**ANNEX 2: GUIDELINE FOR METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH ON SURVIVORS OF CROSS-BORDER TRAFFICKING**

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**GUIDELINE FOR METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH
ON SURVIVORS OF CROSS-BORDER TRAFFICKING**

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| LIFELINE | |
|---|---|
| **Session: 1** | **Duration: 30 min** |

**Objectives :**
**To explore life course transitions**
➢ To identify positive and negative events and their impact on the participant's life
➢ To explore inner resources of the participant

**Note to researcher :**
• Explain that you are going to ask her to draw her lifeline and that you will then discuss about some situations of her life she would like to share with you.
• This exercise may take some time or take very short time.
• The participant may or may not need questions for guidance. It is up to the researcher to use the questions below or not.

**Procedure :**
1/ Ask the respondent to draw her own life line on a sheet of A4. Starting at birth, she draws a line outwards towards today, with the peaks and lows of positive and negative experiences drawn either above or below the central line. *The participant does not have to write the explanations for*

*dips – she can use symbols instead. Nor she will be expected to share her lifeline if she does not want to.*

2/ Ask the respondent to look at the difficult events below the central line.
- What supports did she need to cope with the situation?
- Was there anything in particular that helped her?

Discuss her coping strategies in relation to the following statement and ask for examples:
- What she can think, do, give, understand, etc.
- What she has got, done, expected, wished etc.
- Who was she as a girl? Who is she as a woman? How does she imagine herself in the future? Etc.

3/ Ask the participant what is important to her in her life. For example:
- What relationships are important to her?
- What does she feel she is capable of doing?
- What gives her purpose in life? What values are important to her? What are her beliefs?

4/ Ask the participant what she has enjoyed and did not enjoy with this exercise. 5/ Ask the participant what she has learnt about herself.

**Source/Web links**
http://www.tdh.ch/en/documents/psychosocial-training-manual-toolkit

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### FAMILY TREE

| Session: 2 | Duration: 30 min |
|---|---|

**Objectives :**
**To explore family structure and type of relationships in order to identify social support in her family environment**

**Note to researcher :**
- This exercise will give the opportunity to explore the family structure, how it functions or dysfunctions.
- It will also help to understand the kind of relationship the participant has got with her family, both ways: how they see, think about her and how she sees, thinks about them.

**Procedure :**
1/ Introduce the family tree and explain that you are going to write (or the participant) the name of the member of her family.
2/ For each member of the family, ask her if she would like to tell a story about it (what is her/his personality, how she feels towards this person, how this person feels towards her, etc.)
3/ Explore separation processes if any and all forms of abuses (psychological, physical) if any.

Additional questions for guidance if needed:

5/ Ask the participant to think about a situation in the past where she needed help and there was no one to help her the way she expected
6/ Ask the same question for the present time: is there any situation today for which she needs help and can she find the help she looks for?
7/ Ask her if she thinks there will be a situation in the future when she may need some help and what will happen?

**Source/Web links**

## MONODRAMA WITH OBJECTS

| **Session: 2** | **Duration: 30 min** |
|---|---|

**Objectives:**
➢ **To explore psychosocial support in their environment after they have left home and has started the journey.**

**Note to researcher :**
- It is essential to understand their coping mechanisms, their resilience skills.
- Monodrama will help the participant to reenact some situations or express emotions she may have not experienced before.

**Procedure :**
1/ Present different objects and ask the participant to pick up the one that represents her the most (if she does not comfortable with that, show her by giving an example, it will be more interactive)
2/ Ask the participant whether she would like to tell a story about it.

Additional questions for guidance if needed:

3/ Ask the participant to think about a situation where she needed help. Explore how she felt, which help was she expecting? What would she do if someone would have been in her situation?
4/ Explore potentially dangerous situations she has faced and how she has coped with it.
5/ Ask the same question for present time: is there any situation today (since she was rescued) for which she needs help and can she find the help she looks for? What does she expect and from whom?
6/ Ask how a person with a particular characteristic would behave in a significant situation
7/ Ask if she thinks there will be a situation in the future when she may need some help and what will happen?

**Source/Web links**

| BODY MAPS | |
|---|---|
| **Session : 3** | **Duration : 20 – 30 minutes** |

**Objectives:**
➢ **To know better participant's ideas about physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing;**
➢ **To elicit the characteristics participant associate with well-being.**

**Note to researcher :**
- Due to the situations of violence and exploitation respondents have been through, it is important to explore their self-esteem and self-image in order to understand how they have been affected or not.
- As they may have contracted some STDs that they are aware of or not. In that case, her

**Procedure:** Today, we are going to talk explore the body image. Body image is about: how you perceive your body visually, how you feel about your physical appearance, how you think and talk to yourself about your body, how you think other people view your body, how you feel in your body. Therefore, I will present you the following exercise:

1. Ask the respondent to think of a female or male adult or child/young person about whom she could say, 'yes, s/he is basically doing well. *If you think it is relevant, specify the age range you want the respondent to choose her person from (i.e. between 5 and 10, etc.).*
2. When she has got the person in her mind, ask her to draw a stick figure of that person on the sheet of paper and the person's actual age (in years). If she cannot then you can draw for her.
3. Ask the respondent to tell you 5 things about this person that lets her know that s/he is doing well (ie. she smiles a lot, she is never sick, she looks good, she is not nervous, etc.)
4. Once she has completed this task, ask her to think of another person of the same age group but for whom she could say that this person 'is not doing well'. Repeat steps 2 and 3.
5. Then, ask the respondent to draw herself. Ask her to think about what makes her feel bad or sick. Then ask her to think about the place in or on the body or the body part that feels bad. Then ask her to draw within the outline of the body the affected area or organ and its location.
6. When all the diseases and conditions have been identified and the affected parts drawn on the body, ask the respondent to list the causes of these conditions and what can be done to cure these conditions (who in their community/environment is available to treat them?).
7. Finally ask what is different or similar between herself and the 2 other people she has described above;

Additional questions:
2/ Does she spend time making her appearance more attractive? 4/ Does she rather feel bad or good about her body?
5/ Does she feels sad when she is naked?
7/ Does she compare her body to other people's bodies?

**Source/Web links :**
**http://books.google.fr/books?id=5lptKkNwTvkC&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=altered+body+image+sexual+violence&source=bl&ots=Ax09Dry5-P&sig=l0Zo2ZciwzS4050v_Fz20LR92dk&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=He3uUfPqK42r0AWPxIDYAw&ved=0CF0Q6AEwBQ**

| JOHARI WINDOW | |
|---|---|
| **Session : 4** | **Duration : 20 minutes** |

**Objectives :**
➢ **To exploring protective mechanisms of self and others**
➢ **To explore relationships between the respondent and the family/community she lives with by creating awareness about degrees of inter-personal communication.**

**Note to researcher :**
- The Johari Window is a communication model that is used to improve understanding between individuals. This tool looks into how we view ourselves and how others view us. It is also a model for opening up the lines of communication with others. It serves to show how we become increasingly more open to others as we get to know them and share information about ourselves.
- By explaining the idea of the Johari Window, you can help the respondent to understand the value of self- disclosure, and you can encourage her to give, and accept, constructive feedback.

**Procedure :**
1/ Show and explain the Johari window.
2/ Start with the explanation of the "blind window", then the "unknown", then the "Open" and last the "hidden". Use minimum words. Speak slowly so she can study the 4 windows as you speak.
- Open Area (Quadrant 1): This quadrant represents the things that you know about yourself, and the things that others know about you. This includes your behavior, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and "public" history.

- Blind Area (Quadrant 2): This quadrant represents things about you that you aren't aware of, but that are known by others. This can include simple information that you do not know, or it can involve deep issues (for example, feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, unworthiness, or rejection), which are often difficult for individuals to face directly, and yet can be seen by others.

- Hidden Area (Quadrant 3): This quadrant represents things that you know about yourself, but that others don't know.

Unknown Area (Quadrant 4): This last quadrant represents things that are unknown by you, and are unknown by others.

3/After, invite the respondent to give an example for each of the
quadrant. 4/ Ask her: What does all this mean to her?
• Why is this important?
• How can she use this information? With the family? In the community with friends and neighbors?

**Source/Web links**
http://www.businessballs.com/johariwindowmodel.htm

| SPIDER DIAGRAM |
|---|

| **Session: 5** | **Duration: 40 min** |
|---|---|

**Objectives :**
- ➤ **Towards a better sense of safety and security; Bonds and belongings**
- ➤ **To generate data about the respondent's social networks and the people that she may turn to for help with different situations/problems.**

**Note to researcher: A Spider diagram** is used to investigate and enumerate various aspects of a single theme or topic, helping the respondent to organize their thoughts. The process of creating a spider diagram helps the respondent to focus on the topic, and helps the respondent to monitor their growing comprehension of the topic. It also helps point out the areas where the respondent must investigate more (where the web is hard to fill out).

In relation to 5th session topic, the researcher will investigate pre-trafficking period, exploitation period and rehabilitation/rescue period as well as the thematic that have not been explored enough in the previous session. The researcher may prepare a set of images cut from newspapers and magazines.

**Procedure :**
1. The researcher introduces the activity by saying something like: 'this is a nice activity because we are going to draw on a map different aspects of your life'. Explain that you will do this by drawing a spider.
2. The researcher chooses 3 thematic and the respondent choses one. Example of thematic: friends in the brothel, relationships with family since return back home, being a mother in the RLA, etc.  For  each thematic, the respondent will choose one image and place it in the middle of the centre
3. Give a piece of paper and a pen.
4. For the first thematic, ask the respondent to draw a circle in the middle of the paper and place a picture in the middle of the drawing. This is the body of the spider. The legs of the spider are the problems that they face and the feet are the people they go to for help or they had wish to go for help. Drawing bigger feet can show people who help a lot. If they cannot answer, then explore the thematic freely.
5. Encourage the respondent by drawing a spider yourself, but do not write down anything on the legs or feet. If the respondent still finds this activity difficult, it may help to ask her about a problem she faces and then whom she may go to for help. Remind her that there are no right or wrong answers.

**Source/Web links**
http://www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/spider/

| RECOVERY STAR |
|---|

| Session : 6 | Duration : 45 minutes |
|---|---|

**Objectives :**
> **To explore life changes and reflect on actual life stage**

**Note to researcher :**
The Recovery Star has been made for helping people in their recovery from mental illness. For this exercise we will only consider the recovery aspect. 'Recovery usually means changing things in a number of areas of your life so that things work better for you. Making changes isn't easy but understanding how change works can help.
Many people may find it useful to think about recovery as a journey with different stages. They find it helps to think about which stage they are in and to get a picture of where they are on their journey'.

Note that:
- Addictive behaviour is not compulsory.
- Work has been changed to occupation

**Procedure :**
1. Explain the objective of the exercise: "we are going to explore any changes in your life; many people may find it useful to think about changes as a journey with different stages. They find it helps to think about which stage they are in and to get a picture of where they are on their journey'.
2. Ask the respondent to look at the Ladder of Change and explain how it works. Ask her to think about an area of her life where she has made changes at the time from exploitation to rehabilitation and see how that fits with the ladder. Page 5, you read (summarize) the detailed ladder of change starting from 1 till you reach the step of the ladder she chooses.
3. Then talk over each of the ten areas (except addictive behaviour) and agree where she is on the ladder for each of the areas. She can decide which ladder to do first. Then, you read each step of the ladder of change starting from 1 till you reach the step of the ladder she chooses. If she needs more details then you can read the detail explanations given for each area.
4. Plot her scores on the Star to get the big picture. Ask her to take a look at what her personal Star looks like and what it says about how things are for her now.
5. Ask the respondent if it represents well the way she thinks about her life.

**Questions related to the activity:**
- What are the areas of your life where you have made some changes?
- What was it like before you had decided to change?
- Do you remember thinking about change and then deciding you would really do it?
- What was the first thing that you did?
- See if your experience fits with the Ladder of Change.

**Source/Web links**
http://www.mhpf.org.uk/resources/publications/the-mental-health-recovery-star-user-guide
http://www.imaginementalhealth.org.uk/_uploads/Recovery%20STAR%20User%20Guide.pdf

| Semi-structured interviews |
|:---:|

| SESSION 1 |
|:---:|

**Objectives : To explore life course transitions**
➢ **Explore change in roles and statuses that represents a distinct departure from prior roles and statuses; identification of patterns of stability and change, which usually involves multiple transitions;**
➢ **Turning point such as life events that produce a lasting shift in the life course trajectory could be investigated.**

**Note to researcher :**
• The first session is the most important one as it will give the basis to the future meetings and discussions;
• Introduce yourself and explain what you do and what you are here for.

**Questions :**
1/ Explore with the respondent what is important in her life:
- What relationships are important to her? Why?
- What gives her purpose in life?
- What values are important to her?
- What are her beliefs?

2/ Explore with the respondent her level of empowerment:
- If she could change something in her life, what would she change? Why?
- What are her wishes for the future?

3/ Explore with the respondent her capacity to deal with separation and losses:
- Today, whom does she miss the most? Why?
- Is there anything she misses in herself?

4/ Explore the outsider point of view:
- If a person (someone from a foreign/imaginary country) would come to meet her, what this person would think about her? Would wish for her?

5/ Any other questions you think are relevant

**Related questions :**
Pre-trafficking
- Vulnerability: social vulnerability, emotional, cognitive and structural
- Significant memories/ milestones of life?
- What were the pulls? What were the needs/ dreams? Any fears/ anxieties at that time?
- How had you imagined this journey to the other world to be like?
- Had you heard of trafficking? Prostitution? Girls trafficked from your villages etc.? What did it make you feel?

The journey to the unknown
- Significant images of the journey still in your mind?
- What risks you faced?
- Any parts of the journey enjoyable?

**SESSION 2**

**Objectives : To explore psychosocial support in their environment**
These bi-directional influences between the individual and its environment imply that relationships have impact in two directions, from the individual and towards the individual. It will give the opportunity to the participants to identify main figures of social support in her own environment (past, present and

**Note to researcher :**
The participant may not be used to receive help and she may not have experienced social support. At the opposite she may have developed a sense of helping other people.

**Questions :**
1/ Relationships with her parents: Ask what she thought, felt towards her mother, her father? How did they behave, show emotions towards her?
2/ Relationships with her husband? Ask what she thought, felt towards him? How did he behave, show emotions towards her?
3/ Relationship with her child/children: What does she expect for her child?
4/ Relationship with her brothers and sisters: Ask what she thought, felt towards them? Same question about today? How did he behave, show emotions towards her? Any similarities and differences between them?
5/ Relationships with her grand-parents: Ask what she thought, felt towards them? Same question about today? How did they behave, show emotions towards her?
6/ Other significant relationships with people not related to the journey/trafficking: people from the village, other member of the family. Ask what she thought, felt towards them? Same question about today? How did they behave, show emotions towards her?

7/ Any relationships with people related to the journey/ trafficking. Ask what she thought, felt towards them? Same question about today: How did they behave, show emotions towards her?

**Related questions:**
*Pre-trafficking*
- The quality of the relationships with member of the family: parents, husband, children?

*The journey to the unknown*
- The co-traveller/s with you?
- Relationship with the trafficker/ the person who brought you to the city? What still reminds you of him/ her? How was the image of the trafficker then, before being trafficked? How has that relationship (in reality or imagination) changed since then? Themes of power and control…

*Surviving in exploitation*
- Relationships with others around? Madam? Pimps? Other girls? Brothel owners?
- Clients and relationships with them?

*After rescue, in waiting in shelter home*
- Relationships with others around?

*Today after returning home*
- Any change in power equation with people? Relationships with people? Why? How?

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## SESSION 3

**Objectives : Explore self-esteem and self-image**
- ➢ In relation to physical as well as emotional experience, the body memory has an impact on the shaping of self-image and self-esteem. In case of sexual violence, this impact is rather negative with long lasting effect.
- ➢ Exploring altered relationship to one's own body will allow the identification of psychological (emotional and cognitive) issues at individual level. We will also explore if self-esteem and self-image are rather influenced by community, family, individuals, etc.

**Note to researcher :**
- As self-esteem and self-image are concepts and might be difficult to understand, I suggest organizing the interview in a way that questions related to both concepts are intricate.
- The objective is to explore how her self-esteem and self-image were as a child, young adult, woman, mother, and wife; how did other people perceive her at different ages?

**Procedure :**
**Today, we are going to explore different worlds:** Worry world, Wish world, Scary world, Education world, Angry world, Home world, Sad world, Exploitation world, Play world. *'For each of this world I will ask you to tell me a short story if you feel like and then I will ask you some questions'*.
Depending on the story she tells you, you can choose the questions that are the most appropriate (you may have to adapt the tense):

1. How often do you feel inferior to most of the people you know?
2. How often do you have the feeling that there is nothing you can do well?
3. When in a group of people, do you have trouble thinking of the right things to talk about?
4. How much do you feel worried or bothered about what other people think of you?
5. How confident are you that others see you as being physically appealing?
6. Do you ever think that you are a worthless individual?
7. How much do you worry about how well you get along with other people?
8. When you make an embarrassing mistake or have done something that makes you look foolish, how long does it take you to get over it?
9. How confident do you feel that someday the people you know will look up to you and respect you?
10. Do you often feel uncomfortable meeting new people?
11. Have you ever felt ashamed of your physique or figure?
12. Do you ever feel so discouraged with yourself that you wonder whether you are a worthwhile person?
13. Have you ever felt ashamed because of your body?
14. Do you ever feel afraid or anxious when you are going into a room by yourself where other people have already gathered and are talking?
15. How often do you worry whether other people like to be with you?
16. Do you often feel that most of your friends or peers are more physically attractive than yourself?
17. How often do you dislike yourself?
18. How often are you troubled with shyness?
19. Do you often wish or fantasize that you were better looking?
20. How much are you bothered by what people think about you, good or bad?
21. In general, how confident do you feel about your abilities?
22. When you think that some of the people you meet might have an unfavorable opinion of you, how concerned or worried do you feel about it?
23. Have you ever been concerned or worried about your ability to attract members of the opposite sex?
24. *You can add whatever questions you think are relevant.*

**Related questions :**
*Surviving in exploitation*
- Differences and similarities with other girls and women?
- My experience of sex in prostitution and others (if the survivor has had sexual experiences before or after, or in non-prostitution relationships)

*Today after returning home:*
- What does it mean to you when people call you 'bad'/ dirty, a whore etc.? Are these men or women? Why do men say this? Why do women say this? OR what are the associations with being a prostitute/ sex worker, 'housewife', married….
- In the last…. years, when have you felt most powerful/ happy and confident of yourself? Why?
- Do you feel different from other girls and women?

**Source/Web links**
Questions were selected *from Revised Janis and Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale* from Fleming, J. S., & Courtney, B. E. (1984). The dimensionality of self-esteem II: Hierarchical facet model for revised measurement scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, 404–421.

http://chipts.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/01/Revised-Janis-and-Field-Feelings-of- Inadequacy-Scale.pdf

## SESSION 4

**Objectives : Exploring protective mechanisms of self and others**

➢ Living free from the impact of violence and exploitation; explore relation to power and control, the capacity to recognize and analyse her life experience, the relationships that were established between the perpetrators and the participants and the supporters/helpers.

➢ The ability, capacity, and willingness to keep 'me' safe (before, then and now). In many cases, survivors do not wish to pursue police/legal action due to safety and insecurity risks or other reasons. Assessing the degree to which participants consider being protected when they are in contact with judges, lawyers, and police, is therefore essential to better understand their strategy of protection

**Note to researcher :**

We would like to know whether her experience has led to positive and negative changes in herself (self-esteem, self-image), in others (discrimination or support), changes of priorities, changes in spirituality, etc.

**Questions :**

**Below are some questions that would help to explore changes that may have happened during exploitation and after rescue:**

*About sexuality: it refers to the sexuality of the survivors that is shaped and distorted by the sexual abuse.*

Has she learned something about her body? About her femininity? About her sexuality? Does she think she has got the same knowledge about sexuality than a girl/woman who has not been through the same situation? What has changed the most since she was rescued/ out of prostitution? (see other questions in Session 3 if needed)

*About betrayal: it is the loss of trust in the perpetrator who shattered the relationship, the adult who did not protect her and the friend who lied to her, etc.*

How has her experience changed her level of awareness? How has it changed the way she is in relation with other people? Has she got unexpected or different reactions when she meets new people? How is her attitude towards people that she does not know?

*Powerlessness is experienced through power issues at play in trafficking where they are unable to alter the situation despite feeling the threat of harm and the violation of their personal space.*

After being in a situation where she almost and sometimes completely lost any control over herself and others, what has she learnt? How has she experienced it? How does she see the consequences today? How has she managed to regain control over her body, mind, relationship, etc.?

*Stigmatization is the incorporation of perceptions, of being bad or deserving and being responsible for their situation reinforced by dominant social negative attitudes towards them.*

Since she has been rescued, how does she imagine the reactions/ perceptions of the people they

*About the rescue:* was the rescue organized? Spontaneous? Has she planned her own rescue? What has the rescue changed for her?

*The prosecution:* if she has filed a case, against whom and why? Could she describe how the process is going on? If she plans to do it, how does she imagine it is going to happen? If she has filed a case then why? How? If she has retrieve the case, then why?

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**Related questions :**
***After rescue, in waiting in shelter home***
- Why are you here? (to understand whether the girl sees rescue as rescue or a raid/ violent process to punish her)
- Why were you rescued? By whom?

***Today after returning home:***
- Checking the elements of the definition of trafficking; applicable or not (elements of: criminal acts, the means used to commit those acts and the forms of exploitation)
- People talk about justice for survivors of trafficking. What does justice mean to you now? How will you feel that life has been fair/just?

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**Source/Web links**
**http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3720272/#B38**

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**SESSION 5**

**Objectives : Towards a better sense of safety and security; Bonds and belongings**
Protective factors are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that, when present, mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families.

**Note to researcher :**
- It is essential to assess the respondent's perception of protective and risks factors that contribute to and influence the type and extent of violence in the setting that may lead to traffic.
- Exploring experiences of marginalization, discrimination and distress- personal accounts of living within a marginalized social group/community, during exploitation period.
- Exploring experiences of stigmatization, distress, during rehabilitation period.

**Questions :**
1) Where does the trafficking start? Within the family, within the neighbourhood, within the village, at the border? What could be done to protect the individual before being trafficked?
2) When does the trafficking begin? In childhood when there are situation of neglect and abuse? When the child lives the family at early age? When the family becomes poor? What could be done to protect the individual before being trafficked?
3) In the relationships you had with people in the brothel, were there any similarities with situations

experimented before trafficking? What did you learn about yourself and others since you have been in sexual exploitation.

4) How do you overcome the social stigma linked with your past experiences in exploitation? How do you overcome, deal with your past experiences in exploitation? If any difficulties in present time, which kind of help do you wish to have?

5) How do you consider yourself and others (family, community, etc.)?

6) What would you do to prevent trafficking of other children/adults?

If some of these questions have already been answered, then choose questions from previous sessions that have not been explored.

**Related questions :**
*Pre-trafficking:*
- Thoughts and feelings when you decide to go/take the plunge
- Your imagination of migration – had you known/ seen migrant people? Women? How did you experience them?
- The factors which helped to stay in the village?
- Significant people then/ relationships and the nature of those factors that hampered disclosure / facilitated disclosure, if shared with someone

*Surviving in exploitation*
- My idea of prostitution as it is today
- Why do you think people come to buy sex?
- Does age matter and why?
- Things you hated/ things you liked?
- Questions you had then? Who should/ could answer?
- Significant memories

*Today after returning home*
- Any memories you struggle to forget?

**Source/Web links**
**https://www.childwelfare.gov/can/factors/protective.cfm**

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### SESSION 6

**Objectives : Explore the quality of life**
Their capacity to give a sense to their life experience will also be explored as it will inform us on their process of resilience, their level of empowerment and their ability to take their own decision.

**Note to researcher :**

=> This last session is an opportunity to explore any area that you have not explored before with the respondent.

=> It is also the session of separation. It is important to think it through before starting the session. It is

end the session properly.

**Questions :**

*Start with any questions, topics you have not explored*

*before. About experience in exploitation:*
Why do you think you went through this experience?
Why do you think it may again or may not again happen to
you? What are the positive and the negative sides of your
experience?
How do you think you could help prevent it happening to other adults/children?

*About trafficking:*
What would be your definition for trafficking?
What is justice for survivors if trafficking?
What is justice for you?

*About the research process:*
What have you learned through the interviews?
Did it help you in any way to reflect on your past
experiences? What did you appreciate the most?
What did you dislike the most?

Do you have a sentence, image, song, etc. that represents the most how you felt thought the research
process?

**Related questions :**
*After rescue, in waiting in shelter home*
- Questions that you seek answers to? Anxieties here?
- What do you miss the most as of now? Which part of your life? Why?

*Today after returning home:*
- Is your life today similar/different from life then? How? Why?
- Who has been the most powerful person in your life? How and why?
- Things you would like to tell those who want to stop the trafficking game and racket? Is it ever possible? How? Why?
- Questions you have now? Answers you seek? From whom?
- Why do you think you went through this experience?

**Source/Web links**

**ANNEX 3: OBSERVATION GRID FOR RESEARCHERS**

| | YES | NO | Any comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| Was the number of sessions enough for reaching the objective? | | | |
| Was the supervision useful? | | | |
| Have you learnt something about yourself | | | |
| Have you learnt something about yourself | | | |
| Was the methodology appropriate? | | | |
| Was the participative approach relevant? | | | |
| Were the meetings in Kolkata useful at supporting the | | | |
| Has the research process corresponded to your initial expectations? | | | |