

WHERE  
HAVE  
ALL THE  
FLOWERS  
GONE?

AN EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH  
INTO SEX TRAFFICKING OF GIRLS

**ANDHRA PRADESH AND WEST BENGAL**

**Paramita Banerjee**, born in 1958 in Kolkata (erstwhile Calcutta), India, studied philosophy, obtaining her Master's degree, at a time of political unrest in the state which influenced her positions and perspectives then, and now. She veered from teaching Philosophy at undergraduate level to working as an assistant editor at Orient Longmans (1985-86) and forayed into the development sector with an action research programme on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in the context of urban poverty, a collaborative initiative between the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and the department of Sociology, York University, Canada (1994-96). With a Macarthur Fellowship for Leadership Development (1999-2001), she founded a child protection programme in a red light area in Kolkata, with adolescents of the community affected by prostitution, which later on grew into a youth-led community-based organisation called DIKSHA. A few of her diverse yet significant involvements include translating Bengali women poets' works with Dr. Carolyn Wright and Dr Arlene Zide (1983-93), collating oral narratives of women in the Tebhaga movement in Bengal (headed by Dr. Kavita Punjabi, hosted by Jadavpur School of Women's Studies, supported by SEPHIS, 1997) and coordinating the Bengali Writers' meet to study Censorship - a project headed by Ritu Menon that led to the birth of a Bengali women writers' collective, Soi. In 1998, she documented the evolution of Bengali Group Theatre through interactions with directors, actors, playwrights and critics - a project for Seagull Theatre Quarterly, later published as a special issue. The women's rights movement and then, children's rights initiatives have been keen areas of interest and personal/ professional involvement for Paramita. This research is in following of her involvement as a researcher, trainer and an activist in addressing issues of women and children's rights.



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## TEAM OF 'WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE?'

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# PREFACE

Is human trafficking an issue of crime or development? Most would argue – both. Domestic and international legal instruments define it as a trans-national organised crime, in recognition of the complex criminal nexus that is involved in profiteering from it. Many argue that defining trafficking as a crime alone is a blinkered approach, whereby the context of victims of trafficking, context of socio-economic and political forces that creates vulnerability for victims are ignored, reparation is substituted by prosecution alone. And therefore, rather than welfare, policing has become the centre-stage of action. The focus on the developmental context and responsive welfare measures has taken a backseat.

This research draws its learnings from the implementation of an anti-trafficking case management programme – the objectives of which are to identify cases of children disconnected from their families and assist families to recover traces of their missing children. This programme shows that if the assistance begins from the source areas/ victims' homes, then victims are often recovered even before they are sold off into brothels; traffickers in the source areas (first procurers) can be arrested and evidence from destination points can be used to strengthen the case against the first procurers. And this has a significant impact on prevention – because the crime gets visibilised to the community at large.

But, project implementation experiences also showed that survivors' contexts (family, community and the context of rural India at large) were desperate and gloomy. And there is very little attention paid to this context – so, even after all the 'assistance' of recovering prostituted girls and women, the context they were returning to raises serious questions in the wisdom of survivors returning to situations of deprivation and abuse. And therefore, it seemed necessary to learn, from these experiences, more closely, more in detail, on what is not working, what interventions seem to create dents in the system and could be scaled up and learn, from the researchers' perspectives, what are the questions that are to be asked for its answers to be found.

This research, in its present form, should be useful for development practitioners at national and international levels, researchers and academics and policy makers and influencers. In particular, this research should influence welfare policies targeting the poor in India, adolescents and children in particular, with a bias towards girls and women. Information from this research may be used in publications, with due acknowledgements to Sanjog, Groupe Developpement and the Principal Researcher.

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# FROM THE RESEARCHER'S DESK



Can subjective truths count as knowledge? One of the most distinctive contributions of feminist discourse on sociology in general, and social research in particular, has been the formulation of an affirmative response to this question. Traditionally, social research had been guided by the principles of 'rigorous scientificity', which stress the so-called objective that is apparently free from any personal biases / standpoints of the researcher/s. Feminist discourse challenged this paradigm and went on to meticulously point out how human conditions actually disallow any standpoint that is entirely free from the human subjectivity. The choice of the research topic, for instance, the research questions that are formed, the elements that are observed in order to find answers to those queries, and so forth. In the name of objectivity, these subjective elements guiding a research are kept hidden. Feminist discourse has brought these subjective truths at the centre of discursive enquiry. As Sandra Harding points out: 'The researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests... Introducing this "subjective" element in the analysis... increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the "objectivism" that hides this kind of evidence from the public.'<sup>1</sup>

One significant point made by this school of feminist thought is to argue that the oppressed and the marginalised do not necessarily experience reality in the same way as the oppressor does. The recognition of this fact and the inclusion of the experiences of the oppressed help to generate a more objective account of the world, therefore. It should have been natural, perhaps, to privilege the subjective over the objective when the phenomenon under investigation is trafficking of adolescent girls and young women for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation – referred to as prostitution till the other day. Especially given that this research has been completely based on hard evidence, and the narratives of the girls/ women restored from situations of prostitution and/or families whose girls are yet to be restored, form a core part of this research.

Unfortunately, though, we do not yet live in a gender-just world, implying that patricentric values that obliterate the intelligence of emotions and the reality of subjective experiences are still privileged. Feminist research methodologies have certainly not attained global acceptance – though they have been able to keep the debate alive. As a result, credibility of research findings, especially when carried out by non-academic organisations, depend far too heavily on being 'objective' – i.e. free from the influence of subjective experiences of the researchers. This is particularly significant for activist organisations, where advocacy with bodies of power is one of the main aims of research – for representatives of such bodies are characterised by their emphasis on numbers. It was imperative, therefore, that the methodology of this research combine quantitative and qualitative techniques that are globally recognised as 'valid' methods of social research. Throughout this research report also, analyses of the data, observations from the field interactions and the lessons learnt have been presented in as structured and 'objective' a manner as possible within human limitations.

However, as pointed out by noted feminist scholars – research topics, research questions and the elements of focus for finding answers to those questions are inevitably determined by the social standpoint of the researcher/s. Such standpoint, in turn, depends on social experiences, which are inevitably different for members of different social groups in a world where inequalities and power imbalances rule.<sup>2</sup> This research has not remained beyond the influence of such social consciousness either. It is perhaps the shared experiences of oppression and powerlessness that united the interviewees and the interviewer/s – though their socio-economic backgrounds differed widely. While the sense of empathy generated feelings of anger and outrage – the differences in experiences because of the socio-economic variations also produced feelings of shame and guilt. Perhaps the fact that one of the co-researchers was a man, socio-economically belonging to the same class as the other two, determined his inability to capture his own emotional journey in course of this research, while the two women have been desperate for a space to narrate the emotional turmoil

<sup>1</sup>Harding, Sandra (ed): *Feminism and Methodology*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987, p – 9.

<sup>2</sup>This approach is known as the Standpoint theory in sociological discourse. Renowned feminist theorists like Alison Wylie, Donna Haraway, Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Patricia Hill Collins and Sandra Harding have contributed to the formulation of this theory.



they had experienced. It is those experiences that made a feminist reading of the subject and the context inevitable – it was not pre-planned. Also, the recognition of subjective truths as indispensable components of knowledge has put the human subject at the centre of this research report. There is enough statistics for those whose 'truths' are determined by numbers only. But for others ready to accept the value of the human subject – this report has deliberately focused on the world of adolescent girls in situations of rural and urban poverty (not just economic, but of the quality of life itself). The world as they experience it. They have forced their way into the centre and added value to this research, in the process.

It is impossible to end this section without thanking those who have variously helped me in this research. As usual, my mother held fort while I was away, taking care of my 15-year old daughter. She, thankfully, is seasoned enough to deal with her mother's long absences. My sister – home on a sabbatical after many years – bore with my being away, shared the chores for my daughter with Ma and listened to me recount incident after incident from the fields. My thanks to her. My heartfelt gratitude to all my colleagues at GD, Sanjog and elsewhere in the development world to have handled my outbursts from time to time. You people have no idea how crucial that has been in restoring some degree of equanimity and balance! Special thanks to Roop, who formulated the research framework and helped thrash out the research questions at the very outset; to Uma for her help in coordination at the outset and for chipping

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Most of all, my thanks to those girls and young women who agreed to re-live their journeys of distress for us. To families who narrated their experiences, efforts and failures even as their eyes misted for their yet-to-be restored daughters.

Sumita and Bijay – thank you for being fellow travellers on this physically and emotionally disturbing road, and back again to rationality for shaping the report. I hope, for the sake of all three of us, that the information gathered motivates development activists, organisations and donor agencies to re-think their strategies for anti-trafficking interventions so that there can be justice for all, finally!

I'd like to sign off by pointing out that this research has re-generated an urge in me to explore possibilities for conducting activist researches employing feminist methodologies that challenge the subjective/objective divide and emphasise that the personal is the political.

- *Paramita Banerjee*





# 1

## **INTRODUCTION**

Backdrop

Goals and Objectives

Methodology

Profiles of Participating Organisations

The Geographical Location of the Research

Limits of this Study

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Palermo Protocol<sup>1</sup> defines human trafficking as:

. . . Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of 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.<sup>1</sup>

### BACKDROP

Paraphrased in simpler terms, human trafficking refers to the practice of people being tricked, lured, coerced or otherwise removed from their home or country to be forced to work with no or low payment in highly exploitative situations, with the recruiter commercially benefiting from this. This definition has been reached through a series of changes from the early 1900s when trafficking in persons – especially in women for the purpose of prostitution – emerged as an issue of trans-national concern. The first comprehensive definition of trafficking in persons was adopted by the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others was adopted in 1949, which came into force from July 1951. The problem in this definition was that it linked trafficking in persons exclusively to prostitution, which emerged to be too narrow as understanding of the phenomenon improved in course of time. In addition, critics have pointed out that this Convention is focused on crime prevention, thereby lacking efficacy as a human rights instrument, over and above reflecting a protectionist attitude towards women.<sup>2</sup> The definition provided in the Palermo Protocol is believed to capture different dimensions of trafficking in persons and provides an inter-disciplinary, multi-sectoral approach.

This movement away from the one-dimensional understanding of trafficking as linked only to prostitution is not captured in the SAARC Convention – where trafficking is defined as moving, selling or buying of women and children for prostitution within and outside a country for monetary or other considerations with or without the consent of the person subjected to trafficking. 'Persons subjected to trafficking' are thus limited only to women and children who are forced/ lured into prostitution 'through deception, threat, coercion, kidnapping, sale, fraudulent marriage, child marriage, or any other unlawful means. Prostitution has been described as 'sexual exploitation or abuse of

<sup>1</sup>Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, a protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to which India is a signatory

<sup>2</sup>Kinnu, Gunjan: *From Bondage to Freedom: An Analysis of International Legal Regime on Human Trafficking*; National Human Rights Commission; New Delhi; 2006; p - 70

persons for commercial purposes.<sup>3</sup> While this Convention has been hailed by many as an indicator of the SAARC States' commitment towards effective regional cooperation for addressing the issue of trafficking in persons for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation – it has also been critiqued at different levels, and from different perspectives. Other than being too narrow in its view of trafficking, it also fails to recognise the agency of adult women and does not put the human rights approach into full focus.

Despite the problems, the definition provided by the SAARC Convention has been adopted for this research, which looks exclusively at girls and women who have/had been trafficked for purposes of prostitution – since that is also the definition that guides the legal provisions within India. However, recognising the inalienable issue of human rights violation in the act of trafficking in persons – this research has also consciously made an attempt at putting the human subject at the centre, as already presaged in the section entitled 'From the Researcher's Desk'.

India continues to be a source, destination and transit country for human trafficking – both within its national boundaries and across borders. In the latest United States Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons,<sup>4</sup> published in June 2009, India continues to be marked as a Tier 2 country – signifying that the efforts of the union and state governments towards curbing human trafficking is significant, but complete compliance with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking has not been achieved. This same report specifically mentions the state governments of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Maharashtra and West Bengal as demonstrating considerable engagement with prevention, protection and prosecution with relation to cases of trafficking – specifically for commercial sexual exploitation. Interestingly enough,

this report also mentions that state governments have failed to prosecute most traffickers – both in the sphere of trafficking for forced/ bonded labour and commercial sexual exploitation. The states mentioned above as proactive, jointly accounting for a combined population of 360 million, convicted 30 sex traffickers in total – as per the data of 2007 available at the time of preparing the report.

The engagement of civil society organisations, both large-scale NGOs and small, localised community-based organisations, plays a recognisably significant role in the country's anti-trafficking programmes. That, however, has not resulted in any visible reduction in the paucity of data related to trafficking. Elaborate search on the internet for facts and figures related to human trafficking in India failed to yield much results beyond 2005. The only up-to-date report is the country report by the U S Department of State referred to above, which also mentions the paucity of authentic data related to trafficking. The same is mentioned in most studies carried out regarding this phenomenon. Anecdotes – many, hard evidence – few. This paucity of structured information is one of the triggers for the current research.

The only research done with a focus on data gathering through the narratives of people connected with the act of trafficking, especially for commercial sexual exploitation, seems to be the one commissioned by the National Human Rights Commission, carried out by the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi and supported by UNIFEM. Undertaken in 2002–03, this study has relied on the narratives of 4000 respondents across India, covering various stakeholders starting with the restored victim to madams, brothel owners and clients of paid sex. No other serious research implemented with a similar methodology seems to be available. This finding

has determined the approach of this research – where interactions with restored victims and their families, the families of those yet to be restored, with other community members and with the personnel of organisations carrying out anti-trafficking programmes in the geographical areas covered form a major source of information collated and analysed here.

The reason behind leaving out other stakeholders like brothel owners, madams, pimps and clients probably forms a point of departure from the norm for this research. Traditionally, trafficking is always studied and addressed post facto – so that raid, rescue, reintegration, rehabilitation still forms the crux of most anti-trafficking programmes. The project that guides this research is different insofar as it is focused on prevention through interventions in source areas, rather than at destination points. Naturally, this research is also focused on source areas. That is why, restored girls/ women have been interviewed in their current places of residence – whether a slum, or a village, or in a handful of cases a shelter home run by the State or an NGO. Families and communities are those from where girls/ women had gone missing/ been trafficked. Organisations are those that work at source areas with a view to preventing the act of trafficking. The protection aspect studied through the processes of reintegration and rehabilitation is also concentrated on source areas and organisations working there.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The research on trafficking in girls and women for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation commissioned by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), supported by UNIFEM and carried out by the New Delhi-based Institute of Social Sciences – implemented in 2002–03 and available as a report/ book in 2005 – recommends vulnerability

<sup>3</sup>SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, signed on 5th January, 2002, at Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>4</sup>U S State Department Trafficking in Persons Report, Country-to-Country Reports section, June 2009

## The principal purpose of this research has been to develop a keener understanding of the context of trafficking, with a focus on source areas.

mapping studies in source areas.<sup>5</sup> This is a clear pointer to the paucity of such data. Further, in the same section the need to carry out such mapping from a holistic manner involving vulnerable communities and restored victims has also been stressed – again indicating that such information is not available in any organised manner.

The current research fits these recommendations exactly. Based on the hard evidence of girls actually disconnected from their families, with families accusing one or more specific person/s as the trafficker, as also on the narratives of girls and women restored from sex trafficking – the principal purpose of this research has been to develop a keener understanding of the context of trafficking, with a focus on source areas. This is to strengthen areas of prevention and reintegration, with particular focus on the following:

- » Exploring specificities of vulnerabilities to sharpen prevention and protection strategies further.
- » Assessing the context of survivors who have returned to their families, determining the required nature of assistance, and therefore explore possible strategies of assistance to survivors, roles of NGOs and the State therein.
- » Taking stock of the developmental context and effectiveness of NGO initiatives, reach of State sponsored support in prevention and assistance to survivors who have returned to their families and communities, which should aid local NGOs and

governments, international NGOs and donor agencies to strategise further.

To achieve the above, the broad objectives of the research were formulated as:

1. Examining the extent of and trends in the trafficking of children and adolescents in the project areas of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh
2. Mapping intervention strategies that have worked / not worked in prevention of trafficking, protection of children vulnerable to trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation of victims of trafficking
3. Assessing scalability and explore approaches to build sustainability of initiatives with effective strategies
4. Eliciting recommendations from stakeholders on programming towards the same objectives

Given that the research was to be geographically located in districts of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal where partner organisations of the commissioning agency were active, there was scope within the research to formulate specific questions for each objective. Research questions were formulated accordingly as detailed below:

### FOR OBJECTIVE 1: EXTENT AND TRENDS IN TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Specific queries to which answers were sought under this objective are as follows:

- » What is the demographic and socio-economic profile of victims of trafficking?
- » What are the factors that made them vulnerable?
- » Can particular districts in the two states be identified as major source areas?
- » Are there areas in the two states that act as transit points?
- » If the above is true, which are the source and destination areas for these transit points?
- » What is the demographic and socio-

economic profile of the traffickers?

- » What is the nature of the relationship between the trafficker and the victim?
- » How many cases of luring victims with marriage / promise of marriage can be identified?
- » How many cases of luring victims with the promise of jobs can be identified?
- » What have been the kinds of entrapment of victims other than employment and marriage, if any?

### FOR OBJECTIVE 2: EFFICACY AND EFFICIENCY OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION, PROTECTION, RESCUE AND REHABILITATION

Specific queries to which answers were sought under this objective are as follows:

- » What are the models / systems of prevention initiated in source areas towards prevention of trafficking?
- » Which of these models are the most functional / sustainable? What are the factors contributing to that?
- » What have been the models of outreach and/or case identification of trafficked victims? Which of these approaches have proved to be the most effective (as justifiable by data and functionality)?
- » What are the protection initiatives generated by projects? Which among these have proved to be effective? How? Why?
- » Have there been networking initiatives? Between which agencies? Why? To what extent has such networking proved to be effective in generating and/or sustaining prevention and protection initiatives?
- » How many instances of lodging a case against a trafficker can be found in source areas? What is the status of these cases? What have been the challenges?
- » How many instances of lodging a case against a trafficker in transit

<sup>5</sup>A Report on Trafficking in Women and Children in India: 2002-03; volume 1; NHRC-UNFEM-ISS Project; Coordinator – Sankar Sen; Principal Investigator-Researcher – P M Nair, IPS; New Delhi, 2005, p - 390

- areas? What is the status of these cases? What have been the challenges?
- » How many cases have been lodged against traffickers in destination areas? What is the status of these cases? What have been the challenges?
  - » Have there been linkages built between source, transit and destination area organisations for prosecution? What kind of linkages? What has worked? If no linkages have been built, has that adversely affected prosecution? What had been the barriers against such linkages?

### FOR OBJECTIVE 3: SCALABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Specific queries to which answers were sought under this objective are as follows:

- » To what extent is the organisation capable of handling a scaled up intervention?
- » To what extent are the effective strategies replicable in other geographical locations with similar demographic, economic and socio-cultural features
- » Which are the areas where State involvement can be increased, towards building sustainability of the interventions?

### FOR OBJECTIVE 4: ELICITING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

For this objective to be achieved, a dissemination plan has been formulated to generate stakeholder responses.

### METHODOLOGY

This research has been carried out using both quantitative and qualitative methods; it has also used both primary and secondary sources of information. The base documents used for the quantitative aspect of the research

were the case details documented by NGOs and CBOs working in 6 districts of Andhra Pradesh and 8 districts of West Bengal. The sample size for the field interactions, constituting the qualitative part of the research, was determined on the basis of these documents. Combined with desk research – of published books on this subject and literature available on the internet – these case details also formed the secondary sources of information for this research.

The entire data base captured in the case reports have been analysed to get an overall picture of the situation in the two states of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, as far as children and youth still away from their homes / been away but now returned are concerned. A total of over 1200 cases of children and youth – both male and female, with the bulk of them being female – have been studied in this process. The quantitative data base has then been narrowed down to cases of females marked as 'trafficked' in the case documents and this was used for both further analysis of current status and as the base for determining the sample size. A total of 569 cases were marked as trafficked girls / women – 91 in Andhra Pradesh and 478 in West Bengal. Accordingly, following the 10% rule for sampling – 9 cases in Andhra Pradesh and 48 cases in West Bengal were identified for field interactions, totalling to 57 cases. As already mentioned, field interactions were primarily to contribute to the qualitative aspect of the research. But, findings from the field have also been analysed quantitatively to provide a comparison to the findings from the base documents.

A combined method of random, purposive and convenient sampling was used. Initially, all cases were segregated on the basis of the victim's gender. Next, all female cases marked as 'trafficked' were segregated and every tenth case was marked for field interactions. The purposive aspect was

that cases were deliberately distributed across organisations to ensure that the entire geographical area under the project could be covered. Another level of purposive and convenient sampling happened when the sample cases were shared with partner organisations, who asked for substitution. Such substitution was in some cases purposive: a case marked 'trafficked' initially may later have been found to be a case of teenage love affair leading to elopement, while a case marked as 'missing' may later have been found to be a case of trafficking – especially in situations when the victim was rescued or managed to return on her own. Keeping in focus the purpose of the study, the first kind of cases that might have come into the sample were purposively substituted by the second variety. Some cases of convenient sampling had to be brought in as some restored girls/ young women had since been married off and were no longer available within the geographical locations to be covered. Sometimes, the family of such a girl/ woman requested her to be spared, lest talking about the trafficking experience creates any problem in her marriage – since such nuptials were often arranged without bringing the issue into the fore.

Finally, though, a total of 69 cases have been covered in field interactions – taking the total sample size to slightly more than 12% of the number of female cases marked as 'trafficked'. This increase was the result of the following:

- » Two sisters from the same family had been trafficked in some cases. While only one of them had been marked for field interactions, in actuality – both cases naturally got covered. This happened in West Bengal.
- » Two or more girls from the same neighbourhood had been trafficked and rescued – so that both of them were around during field interactions. This also happened in West Bengal.
- » The above two factors led to 56

cases being covered in West Bengal, instead of 48.

- » In Andhra Pradesh, some of the cases marked in the sample were found to be cases of teenage love affair leading to elopement, and/or cases of child marriage and domestic violence after that – rather than cases of trafficking, which is how they were marked. This resulted in inadequacy of qualitative data generated on issues related to trafficking. Four rescued women – who had been trafficked as children – were deliberately added, therefore. The total number of cases thus rose to 13 instead of 9. An extra district also got covered in the process.

The qualitative part of the research was generated through field interactions following the techniques described below:

- » One-to-one interactions with Directors/ CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) of participating organisations
- » FGDs (Focus Group Discussions) with frontline workers of participating organisations
- » One-to-one interactions with frontline workers of specific field areas
- » One-to-one in-depth interviews with restored/returned victims / girls/women
- » In-depth interviews with family members in case of non-returned victims
- » Group discussions with family members of restored/returned victims / girls / women
- » Informal discussions with neighbours and other community members
- » Structured observations during interactions – with restored/ returned victims / girls / women and/or their families, as also with family members of girls yet to be restored.

All qualitative data in this report has, thus, been gathered from primary sources only. It is also to be noted in

this context that ethnography has been used in this report to depict the world of the survivors/ victims so as to capture the subjective realities of their life situations.

### PROFILES OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

A total of 18 organisations partnered this research – 13 in West Bengal and 5 in Andhra Pradesh. Each one of the 18 organisations is based in the district where they implement anti-trafficking and child protection initiatives. Of the 13 organisations in West Bengal, 7 are entirely rural, while the remaining 6 have their main offices in urban locales. All the organisations in Andhra Pradesh are city-based. In terms of size, the organisations vary from small, grassroots-level NGOs to fairly large NGOs working in different districts. All these organisations have had child protection and prevention of trafficking as focus areas in their organisational mandates and have been part of different networks against trafficking. In fact, the organisations in Andhra Pradesh work as a consortium, coordinated by HELP. Of the 13 organisations in West Bengal, 6 organisations working in the North 24 Parganas district work as a consortium while the others work independently. Brief profiles of the participating organisations are provided below.

#### ANDHRA PRADESH

HELP (Help Empowerment of Lower-rural People), under the guidance of the Academy of Gandhian Studies, had conducted a study entitled *Status of sex-workers & their children in Coastal Andhra Pradesh* in 2000. This was done with help from a coalition of NGOs working with victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Based on the findings of the study, all the NGOs that had participated in the study unanimously resolved to form a network for combating Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Andhra

## NATSAP Network Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in Andhra Pradesh

Pradesh in February, 2001. Thus, NATSAP – Network Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in Andhra Pradesh came into existence with the objective of consolidating and coordinating the isolated efforts of activists, individuals, NGOs, CBOs and the Government to combat “Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Trafficking of Children in Andhra Pradesh”. Now it is a network of 50 NGOs working across different districts of the state for prevention of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and women. The Sanjog programme, entitled *Balahita* (literally, Child Welfare) in Andhra Pradesh, is being implemented by 11 NGOs under NATSAP across 8 coastal districts and in 1 district of the Rayelsima region. The present research was done with the help of AFD (Action for Development), working in West Godavari district; HELP, working in Prakasham district; JKWS (Jana Kalyan Welfare Society), working in East Godavari district; MA (Mahila Action), working in Vishakhapatnam district; and SNEHA (Society for National-Integration through Education and Human Action) working in Krishna district.

#### WEST BENGAL

**Barasat Unnayan Prostuti (BUP)** formed a network of 5 community-based organisations called the PAT (Partnership for Anti Trafficking) Consortium to work against trafficking. This Consortium works in the North 24 Parganas District. BUP plays the role of the coordinating agency, apart from intervening directly in the Shimulpur Gram Panchayat (GP) and Sutia Gram Panchayat (GP) areas of the Gaighata block. The other four organisations are:



1. Charuigachhi Light House Society (CLHS) – working in Tangra and Ghat Baur GP areas of the Bongaon block.
2. Gokulpur Seva Sadan (GSS) covers Bankra-Gokulpur GP and Kajjori GP areas of Swarupnagar block.
3. North 24 Parganas Samya Shramajeebi Samiti (NSSS) covers Aturia and Shayestanagar 1 GP areas in the Baduria block.
4. Tegharia Institute of Social Movement (TISM) covers Gatra and Sangrampur-Shibhati GP areas in Basirhat 1 block.

**Shethbagan Mahila Samiti (SBMS)** the lone warrior in Red Light Areas (RLA) has been working with the motto of preventing trafficking and second generation prostitution in four different red light areas in the Basirhat 1 (Bowbazar RLA) and 2 (Matia RLA), Hasnabad (Hasnabad Rail Station area) and Sandeshkhali 1 (Kalinagar RLA) blocks. Though not originally a member of the BUP-led PAT, this organisation was invited to participate in this initiative since none of the PAT members have any experience in RLA intervention.

**Chapra Social and Economic Welfare Association (Chapra SEWA)** was established in 1993 with the aim of working with the deprived and backward communities for the realisation and fulfilment of their human rights. The organisation operates from its office in Chapra, which is a small town on the Indo-Bangladesh border in Nadia district, West Bengal. Most of its interventions are localised within the Chapra block of Nadia.

**Goranbose Gram Bikash Kendra (GGBK)**, registered in 1987, was established by a group of youth activists in the Basanti Block under Canning sub-division of South 24 Parganas district. The organisation aims to stop child trafficking, as also to ensure sustainable economic empowerment

and overall development of the rescued and vulnerable girls/ women so that they are able to live with dignity. Led by Mr Nihar Raptan, the organisation has been working within Sanjog in Canning I, II and Basanti blocks of South 24 Parganas.

**St. John's Ambulance Association (SJAA)**, North Dinajpur District chapter has been functioning as an NGO, registered under the West Bengal Society Registration Act in 1984. Beyond its historically established role of providing first aid support, the organisation has been instrumental in implementing the child protection programme of Sanjog in the Hemtabad block of Uttar Dinajpur district. Apart from other areas of its work, the organisation also works closely with the district administration to activate the ICDS network in the district.

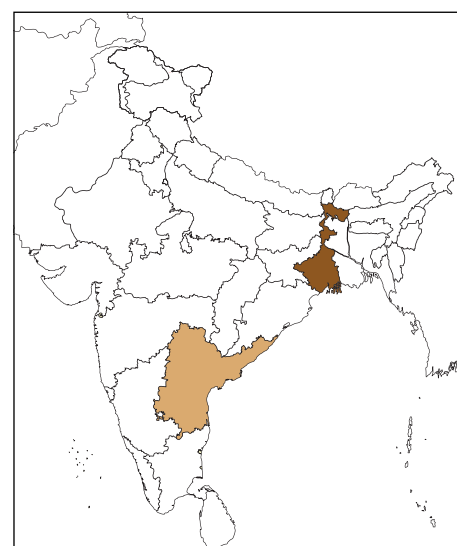
**Society for Participatory Action and Reflection (SPAR)** was started in 1991 by a group of social workers to facilitate change from the grassroots, by building and mobilising people's organisations. The organisation implements the Sanjog programme in Dinhata 1, 2 and Mathabhanga 2 blocks of Coochbehar district through its unit in Coochbehar.

**Sundarban Rural Development and Training Centre (SRDTC)** derived its name from the Sundarbans, the largest delta area in the world, a part of which is situated in the district of South 24 Parganas. In 1985, the formation of SRDTC was initiated by a band of dedicated youth, whose social commitments persuaded them to play a structured role in sharing people's development. Registered under the West Bengal Registration Act in 1986, the organisation started working in South 24 Parganas on issues pertaining to women's empowerment and participatory processes, and gradually extended its work to Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri districts in northern Bengal and to Singhbhum district in Jharkhand. They

have been instrumental in implementing Sanjog through its units in South 24 Parganas and Coochbehar districts.

**Vivekananda Lokshiksha Niketan (VLN)** was established in 1982. Within Sanjog, they work in Ramnagar I and II blocks under Contai sub-division of Purba Medinipur district. Led by a school teacher, Shri Brajo Gopal Shau, VLN aims to address the violation of child rights in the district within the overall ambit of the Juvenile Justice Act.

## THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE RESEARCH



■ Andhra Pradesh  
■ West Bengal

This research was located in 5 districts of Andhra Pradesh and 8 districts of West Bengal. In course of the research, though, an extra district got covered in Andhra Pradesh as a restored woman currently residing in an NGO-run shelter home belonged to one outside the 5 designated districts. The reason behind rooting this research in these two states is clearly reflected in the NHRC report mentioned earlier, which mentions both these states as significant source areas for trafficking in girls and women. Further, both these states also experience a high degree of migration – both intra-state and inter-state, with migration (mostly for work and/or marriage) often acting

as the cover that curtains incidents of trafficking. Both the states have witnessed significant reduction in the percentage of population living below poverty line (from 48.86% in 1973-74 in Andhra Pradesh to 15.77% in 1999-2000 and from 63.43% in 1973-74 to 27.02% in 1999-2000 in West Bengal). But, crimes against women had increased remarkably in Andhra Pradesh when the NHRC report was being prepared. From 482 cases in 2000, crimes reported under ITPA increased to 1332 in 2001. In West Bengal also, it is reported that overall crime rates decreased between 1994 and 1998, but crimes against women increased. Coastal Andhra in particular is mentioned in this report as a source area for trafficking, as are several districts of West Bengal. This research is based in such districts only.<sup>6</sup>

In this section, demographic and economic profiles of the districts of both the states have been presented on the basis of information available on the Census of India, 2001 website<sup>7</sup> and official websites of the districts. Varying degrees of data provided on these sites have made it impossible to provide uniform information about all the districts in both the states. However, in Andhra Pradesh interactions happened in urban situations, while in West Bengal they occurred in rural settings. Information about the cities and towns in Andhra Pradesh and blocks in West Bengal that had been centres of interactions, have also been covered in this section, therefore.

## ANDHRA PRADESH

The districts covered in this state were:

1. East Godavari
2. Guntur
3. Krishna
4. Prakasam
5. Visakhapatnam
6. West Godavari

### East Godavari District

The total population of East Godavari

district is slightly over 48.73 lakhs, as per Census 2001, among whom slightly above 24 lakhs are females. The sex ratio stands at 992:1000, with the urban sex ratio remarkably being 1001:1000. The literacy rate of the district is 65.49%, with female literacy rate being 46.43%. SC (Scheduled Caste) and ST (Scheduled Tribe) populations constitute 17.99% and 3.91% of the total population respectively. In this district, the Satellite City – a huge reconstructed slum area under the Rjahmundry municipality – was covered. The fifth largest city of the state, Rjahmundry is a major business centre of coastal Andhra, with clothing and gold being the main business items. This city is the second largest cloth market in India. There has also been sufficient industrialisation. The total literacy rate of the city is 70%, with the female literacy rate being 60%.

### Guntur District

The total population of the district is 44,65,144, as per Census 2001, with females being 22,14,865. The sex ratio is 984:1000. SC and ST components constitute 18.32% and 4.66% of the total population. Guntur town is the district's head quarter, with a total literacy rate of 68%, with female literacy rate being 62%.

### Krishna District

The total population of this district is 41,87,841 – with the female population being 20,70,440. The sex ratio stands at 961:100. Of the total population, 17.83% and 2.57% are constituted by SC and ST communities respectively. The total literacy rate of the district is 70.03%. Female literates constitute 55.72% of the total female population. In this district, the Aravapeta and Chintala Kalawa areas in Gudivada town were covered. Gudivada is one of the major cities of this district, with a population of 1,12,245 with females formulating 51%. Total literacy rate is 70% with female literacy being 66%. Agriculture and fishing are the major sources of income – with agro industries, textiles, transport

industry, cinema industry also being important. Trade is mostly based on agro products, but there is a gold business and a flourishing financial sector.

### Prakasam District

This district has a total population of 30,59,423, with females numbering 15,07,091. The sex ration stands at 974:1000. SC and ST communities constitute 21.29% and 3.86% of the total population respectively. Incidentally, this district has the lowest rank in terms of urban ST literacy rate, both male and female. Ongole, one of the major commercial townships in this district, was the centre for the interactions here. The Bodipalem slums in Chirala area were covered, as also the shelter home situated in Machavaram, run by the partner organisation here. Commercial activities are based on dairy products, cigars, cereals, pepper, groundnut and pulses.

### Visakhapatnam District

Visakhapatnam district has a population of 38.32 lakhs, among whom 19.02 lakhs are female, making the sex ratio 985 females per 1000 males. A total of 39.9% live in urban settlements. The SC and ST components respectively form 7.6% and 14.55% of the total population. The total non-marginal workforce of the district is 16.03 lakhs and another 2.97 lakhs are identified as marginal workers. Literates constitute 52.25% of the total population, with female literates forming 50.01%. Agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, mining and different kinds of heavy and agro-based industries form the major sources of employment and income earning. Visakhapatnam, popularly known as Vizag, a port city, is the second largest in Andhra Pradesh. It has experienced rapid industrialisation – leading to a very high degree of in-migration. The Kallupakalu slum area under Visakhapatnam municipality was covered where women in prostitution live with other families not engaged in the sex trade.

<sup>6</sup>Op cit, pp – 27, 54 – 58, 62

<sup>7</sup>Available at [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in); [www.eastgodavari.nic.in](http://www.eastgodavari.nic.in); [www.krishna.nic.in](http://www.krishna.nic.in); [www.prakasam.nic.in](http://www.prakasam.nic.in); [www.visakhapatnam.nic.in](http://www.visakhapatnam.nic.in); [www.westgodavari.nic.in](http://www.westgodavari.nic.in). No official web portal of Guntur district was available.

Information on Guntur has been sourced from [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org). For most West Bengal districts, information was gathered from the Census website, though the district portals were also checked – each portal having the same address as the Andhra districts – district name followed by .nic.in. Information about the SC and ST population of West Bengal districts have been sourced from [www.anagrasarkalyan.gov.in](http://www.anagrasarkalyan.gov.in)

### West Godavri District

The total population of the district is 38,03,517, with females totalling 18,93,479. The sex ratio is 992:1000. A total of 19.17% and 2.54% are constituted by SC and ST communities respectively. The literacy rate is 73.53%, with female literacy being 68.99%. The Bhimavaram town, an important commercial centre in the district, was the location and the Lankapeta area was covered. Bhimavaram is one of the largest aqua culture centres in India. Pisciculture has replaced rice production as the major source of economy. The total population of the town is 1,42,064 – with females totalling 70,135.

### WEST BENGAL

The districts covered in this state were:

1. Coochbehar
2. Jalpaiguri
3. Murshidabad
4. Nadia
5. North 24 Parganas
6. Purba Medinipur
7. South 24 Parganas
8. Uttar Dinajpur

### Coochbehar District

This district has a total population of 25,45,532 – with the rural population being as high as 23,22,047. The SC population is 50%, but the ST population is 1% only. The total literacy rate is 66.3%, with the rural female literacy being 54.49%. The sex ratio is 949:1000. Agricultural labour, combined with marginal cultivation, constitutes the major source of income for the rural population. The Coochbehar municipality area, Coochbehar 1 block and Toofanganj 1 block were covered in this district.

### Jalpaiguri District

The total population of the district is 33,89,012 – with 27,80,945 being the rural segment. SC and ST communities constitute 37% and 19% respectively. Female population is 16,49,126. Total literacy rate of the district is 54.26%, with female literacy constituting 21.8%

of the total literate population and 44.8% of the total female population. In this district also, marginal cultivation combined with agricultural labour forms the major source of income for the rural population. In this district, the Jalpaiguri municipality area and the Kumargram block were covered.

### Mushidabad District

The total population of the district is 58,86,560, with 51,70,745 of them residing in rural areas. Rural females number 24,98,783. The SC and ST components constitute 12% and 1% of the population respectively. The sex ratio is 952:1000. The rural female literacy rate is 46.37%. One of the most noticeable features of the district is that – marginal workers constitute only 5.6% of the population, but that is not to signify a high degree of engagement in the organised labour sector, for as high as 65.86% are marked as non-workers, i.e. having no definite source of income. The Domkal block was covered in this district.

### Nadia District

The total population of the district is 46,02,036, with 36,34,710 of them being rural. The SC population constitutes 30% of the population, while the ST component is 2%. The total female population of the district is 22,37,974 – with the sex ratio being 946:1000. The female rural literacy rate is 55.5%, with the total rural literacy rate being 62.32%. There are 2,00,978 small and marginal farmer families in the district and 3,87,235 landless labourers. Chapra, Chakdaha and Ranaghat 1 blocks were covered in this district.

### North 24 Parganas District

This is one of the more urbanised districts of the state, with a total population of 89,37,372, out of which 40,95,769 are living in urban areas. The SC and ST communities constitute 21% and 2% respectively. This is the most populous and economically developed district, being second only to Kolkata, the state's

capital. However, the total rural literacy rate is 69.69%, of which rural female literacy is 61.71%. Blocks covered in this district were: Baduria, Bongaon, Basirhat 1 and 2, Gaighata, Sandeshkhali 1 and Swarupnagar.

### Purba Medinipur District

It needs to be mentioned that the Census 2001 data refers to Medinipur as a whole, for the district had not yet been divided. As per that data, the undivided district had a total population of 96,23,154 – of which 86,70,738 were rural. As per the web portal of Purba Medinipur district, the total population is 44,17,377 – of which 14% are SC and 1% are ST. the total female population is 21,49,055. The sex ratio in the undivided district was 955:1000, but the sex ratio of Purba Medinipur was not available. The total literacy of the district is 80.16%, with female literacy being 70.68%. This district is developed in both agriculture and industries, with Micro and Small Medium Enterprises also being a source of income. Shrimp farming is an important source as well, since this district has a large coastal area. The blocks covered in this district were Contai 1 and 2, Deshapran and Ramnagar.

### South 24 Parganas District

This southernmost district of the state has a total population of 69,17,851 – as many as 58,35,725 of them living in rural areas. The SC population is 32% and ST – 1%. The total rural literacy rate of the district is 68.13%, with rural female literacy being 56.89%. The female population is 33,44,774, with the sex ratio being 938:1000. This district has a BPL family percentage of 37.21 and 34,355 women-headed households. Small and marginal farmers, rural artisans and landless agricultural labourers – who constitute majority of the BPL families – total up to 2,88,979, the bulk among them (2,13,570) being landless agricultural labourers. There are some industries in the parts of the district that are adjacent

to Kolkata, the state's capital. Blocks covered in this district were: Basanti, Canning 1 and 2, Magrahat 1, Namkhana and Diamond Harbour 2.

#### **Uttar Dinajpur District**

The total population of the district is 24,58,260 – with 21,72,998 of them being rural. The SC community accounts for 28% and ST for 5%. Sex ratio is 937:1000. The total rural literacy rate is 43.68%, with rural female literacy being only 38.43%. Tea, jute, potato, ginger and pineapple are the main agricultural products. Agro-based and horticulture based industries exist in the district. Small and marginal farmers total up to 2,24,363. The total number of persons dependent on agriculture is 12,97,557. Hemtabad and Raiganj blocks were covered in this district.

The chapters following capture lessons learnt in course of this research – both through the analyses of the base documents, as also the field interactions. The quantitative aspects have been presented first, with the qualitative learnings following.

#### **LIMITS OF THIS STUDY**

1. The central body of data of cases is based on the case management programme implemented by the participating organisations. Therefore, the actual number of cases that have been identified and managed is dependent on:
  - a. The strength and efficacy of an organisation's outreach programme
  - b. Outreach communication was pre-determined to look only at cases of children and adolescents, though in some cases it includes women and in very few cases, men
2. One of the possible limitations of this research is not to have compared with a control group where children/ adolescents/ young women may

have been disconnected from their families and not been trafficked – which would have made a sharper inquiry into specificities possible

3. Language was a barrier in Andhra Pradesh. Since the Principal Researcher was not versed in Telegu, the local language – needing her to depend entirely on translations and losses that might have occurred in course of translations have remained beyond her understanding.

# 2

## **THE NUMBER GAME**

Findings through Case Documents

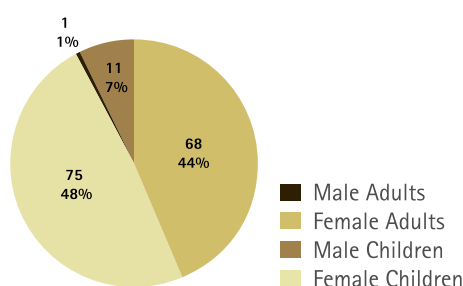
Findings through Field Interactions

## CHAPTER 2 THE NUMBER GAME

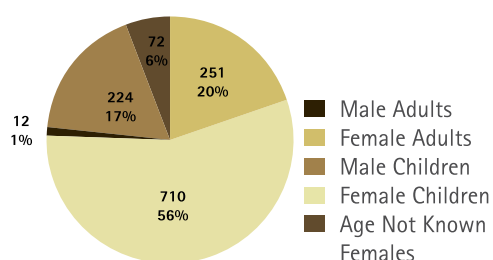
### GRAPHS 1& 2

This categorisation clearly reveals that girls and women together constitute the overwhelming majority of those who are disconnected from their families. It needs to be mentioned in this context that those marked as 'adult' mostly fall within the 19 – 25 age-group.

#### TOTAL CASES - AP



#### TOTAL CASES - WB



The only difference between the two states is that girls (56%) constitute an even larger share in West Bengal than in Andhra Pradesh (48%). But, adult women constitute only 20% - much less than the 44% in Andhra Pradesh.

This chapter captures the analyses of quantitative data – of both the case documents on which the research is based, and the data generated through field interactions. The documents that formed the base of this research are cases of children who are disconnected from their families (missing / trafficked / migrated and then gone missing) – collected by organisations participating in this research. All such information collected and collated till December 2009 has been used, collectively representing 1020 children in the 2 states – 86 in Andhra Pradesh and 934 in West Bengal. There were 75 girls and 11 boys among the documented cases in Andhra Pradesh. Of the 934 cases documented in West Bengal – 710 cases were girl children and 224 were boys.

The total number of cases documented by organisations actually amounts to 1424 – 155 in Andhra Pradesh and 1269 in West Bengal. These were filtered using gender and age perspectives, which resulted in the following categorisations. (Graphs 1& 2)

### FINDINGS THROUGH CASE DOCUMENTS

The reason behind the above categorisation of cases was to cull out cases pertinent to this research focused on girl children who are victims of sex trafficking. Organisations document cases under three headings: missing, trafficked and unsafe migration. The rationale behind the labelling, as explained by organisations, is as follows:

- » **Missing** – when a family can offer no information other than the fact that the child has gone missing; there is no news of her/him and no pointer to anyone who might have influenced that departure.
- » **Trafficked** – when a family mentions that a child (usually a girl, sometimes a woman aged 19 - 25) has been taken by someone, after which there may be no news of her; or the child (sometimes an adult) has been restored and confirmed the trafficking aspect.
- » **Unsafe Migration** – when a family informs that the missing member of the family had initially gone for work, but there is no news since then; or the member has returned and confirmed that s/he was involved in hazardous employment (which is not prostitution or any other form of commercial sexual exploitation).

### CATEGORIES OF CASES

It is to be noted that in Andhra Pradesh, the bulk of the cases documented fall in the 'trafficked' category and only a negligible number are marked as subject to 'unsafe migration'. This was noted as a point of query for verification during field interactions, as the state is characterised by a very high rate of migration for both genders. (Graph 3)

In Andhra Pradesh, the 12 male cases are all under the missing category, implying that the case documents capture no instance of boys/men being trafficked or engaged in unsafe migration.

The same picture emerges for West Bengal also, as far as unsafe migration is concerned. It is, however, to be noted that more cases are marked here as 'missing' than as 'trafficked' – in contrast to Andhra Pradesh. (Graph 4)

### THE GENDER DIVIDE

The significant point to note is the gender divide across different categories of cases. The total number of males form 8% of total cases documented in Andhra Pradesh and 19% in West Bengal. (Graphs 5 and 6)

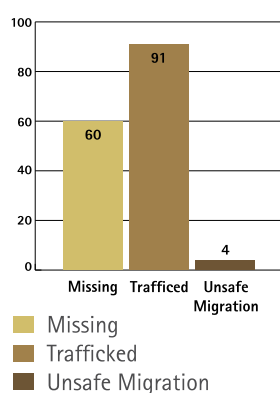
The point to note, however, is the distribution of male and female cases across the categories. In Andhra Pradesh, the 12 male cases are all under the missing category, implying that the case documents capture no instance of boys/men being trafficked or engaged in unsafe migration. In West Bengal, though, the male and female cases are distributed as shown in Graphs 7 and 8.

What the graphs indicate may be summarised as follows:

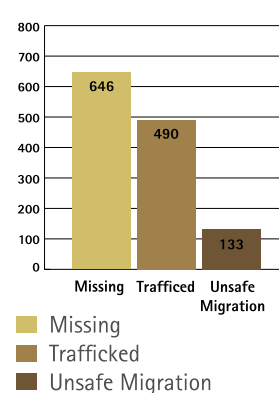
- » An overwhelming number of boys/ young men away from their homes have just gone missing – the family has no clue about where they are
- » A small number of boys/ young men had gone out on work, after which there is no news of them, or they have returned and reported risks faced in course of their migration for employment – as reflected in the

### GRAPHS 3 & 4

CATEGORISATION OF CASES - AP

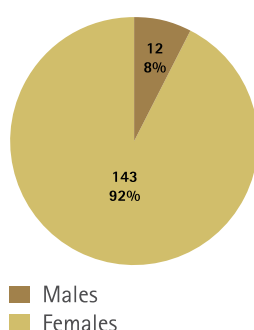


CATEGORISATION OF CASES - WB

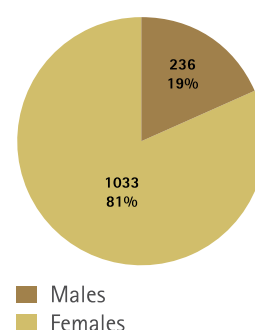


### GRAPHS 5 & 6

GENDER DISTRIBUTION - AP

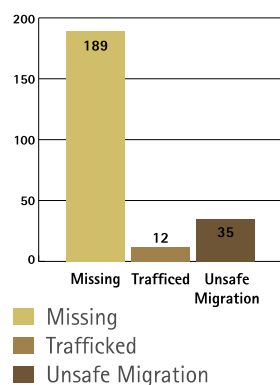


GENDER DISTRIBUTION - WB

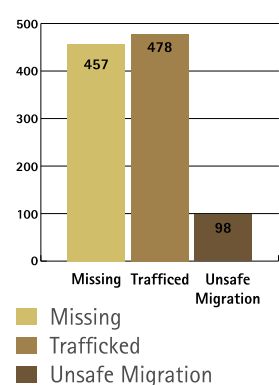


### GRAPHS 7 & 8

MALE CASE DISTRIBUTION - WB

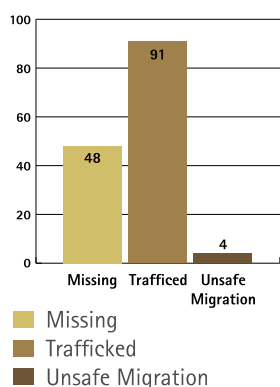


FEMALE CASE DISTRIBUTION - WB



## GRAPHS 9

### FEMALE CASE DISTRIBUTION - AP



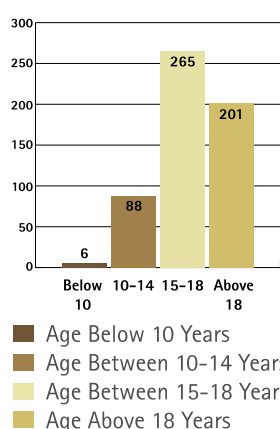
- » 'unsafe migration' category
- » The label of being trafficked is attached to an extremely limited number, as far as boys/ young men are concerned
- » As far as girls/ young women are concerned, the labels of 'missing' and 'trafficked' are almost equal in proportion, with the second being marginally higher – but unsafe migration cases are few, in contrast

Graph 11 reflects that in most of the organisations in West Bengal, most of the documented cases fall in the age-group of 15 – 18. Only in one organisation (SJAA) – there are more cases in the 10 – 14 age range. In Andhra Pradesh, however, more cases fall in the above 18 age-group.

More interesting details come out when gender segregation is applied to the data, as reflected in the Graphs 12 & 13.

## GRAPHS 10

### AGE DISTRIBUTION: TOTAL



As evident from Graph 9, the label of 'unsafe migration' is attached to very few cases. But, all the cases marked under this category are female. However, it is notable that the number of trafficked cases is significantly higher than missing cases – implying that families have been able to point a definitive finger at someone or the other.

The difference in the two graphs is quite striking – reflecting that the disappearance of boys (all male cases in Andhra Pradesh are marked under 'missing', as mentioned earlier) happen mostly between 10 to 14 and declines sharply after that. But, as far as girls and young women are concerned, the numbers keep rising sharply, with the maximum being in the above 18 category.

West Bengal, however, presents a different picture, as reflected in Graphs 14 and 15.

### AGE DISTRIBUTION

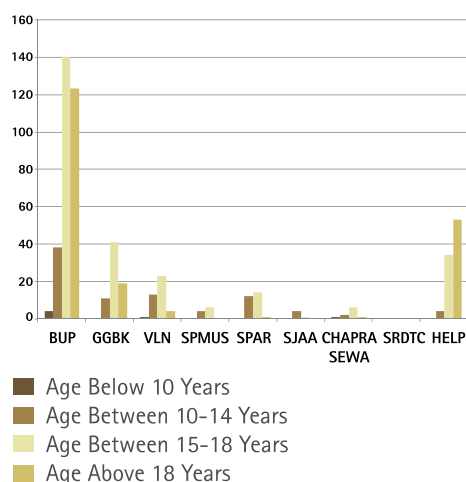
This section depicts the age distribution across case categories in both the states, taking males and females separately. The age distribution of female trafficked cases, as captured in the case documents, has also been depicted. There are interesting differences between the two states, as the adjacent graphs represent. One point to note is that the age marked in these documents refer to the current age of those away from home – whether missing, trafficked or in unsafe migration. These do not reflect the age at which the child/adult went missing/ was trafficked/ was subjected to unsafe migration. It is to be noted that Graphs 10-17 designate the actual values under each age-group.

The difference between the two graphs is not as sharp as in the case of Andhra Pradesh, but there is still a slight difference. Both for males and females, the maximum falls in the 15 to 18 age-group, but for males – the difference between this age-group and that of 10 to 14 is not as sharp as for females.

Once the cases marked as 'trafficked female' were segregated from the rest, the pictures that emerged, revealed an interesting difference between the two states are captured in Graphs 16 and 17.

## GRAPHS 11

### AGE DISTRIBUTION ACROSS ORGANISATIONS



As clearly revealed by Graph 10, taking all the organisations of both the states together and without segregating on the basis of gender – the maximum number of cases fall in the 15 – 18 age range. When age distribution is studied across organisations in both the states, taking boys/ young men and girls/ young women together – some differences appear, as depicted in Graph 10.

These graphs depict that in Andhra Pradesh the maximum number of cases fall in the above 18 category, but in West Bengal – the bulk of cases marked 'trafficked' falls in the 15 – 18 age range. However, since these ages reflect current ages – these graphs really do not depict



much about the age of being trafficked, which were captured only during field interactions.

### CURRENT STATUS

An analysis of the case documents clearly revealed the dismal picture as far as return of girls/ young women and boys/ young men is concerned – irrespective of whether they have simply gone missing, or been trafficked as per information available, or had migrated for some reason and then disappeared. This is captured in the Graphs 18 and 19.

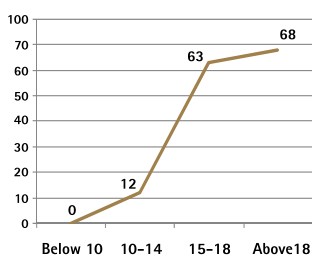
The graphs clearly reveal the failure in tracing missing/ trafficked/ under unsafe migration children/youth, with the scenario only marginally improving with reference to just trafficked cases. This is a point to note with due gravity, for anti-trafficking programmes at both State and non-State levels have traditionally been focused mostly on the post-trafficking process of raid – rescue – reunification – rehabilitation.

The situation of the female cases marked as trafficking at the time of the submission of the MIS by partner organisations in both the states have been analysed in the graph presented overleaf. These are, as mentioned earlier, updated till December 2009. The status is marked under 4 heads:

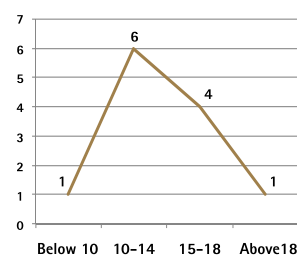
- » Closed – designating that the case is an old one and the organisation has stopped following up on it, though the victim has not been restored
- » Returned – implying that the victim has been reintegrated with her family
- » Not returned – signifying that the victim has not been restored and the organisation is still following up on the case
- » Update not provided – referring to a few cases where the current status has not been mentioned by organisations, for whatever reason not clear from the MIS

### GRAPHS 12 & 13

AGE DISTRIBUTION - FEMALE: AP

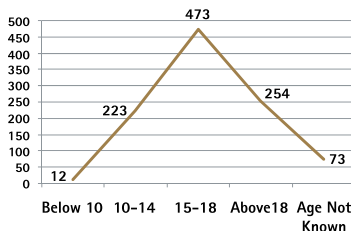


AGE DISTRIBUTION - MALE: AP

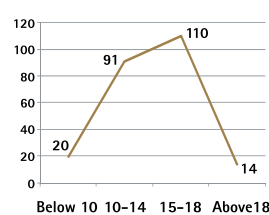


### GRAPHS 14 & 15

AGE DISTRIBUTION - FEMALE: WB

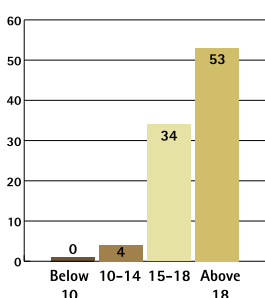


AGE DISTRIBUTION - MALE: WB



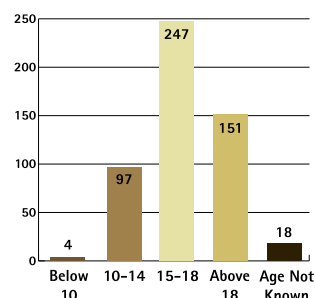
### GRAPHS 16 & 17

AGE DISTRIBUTION TRAFFICKED FEMALE: AP



- Age Below 10 Years
- Age Between 10-14 Years
- Age Between 15-18 Years
- Age Above 18 Years

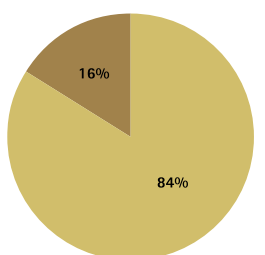
AGE DISTRIBUTION TRAFFICKED FEMALE: WB



- Age Below 10 Years
- Age Between 10-14 Years
- Age Between 15-18 Years
- Age Above 18 Years
- Age Not Known

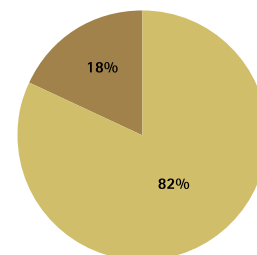
### GRAPHS 18 & 19

TOTAL RETURN SCENARIO



- Total Cases Documented
- Total Return

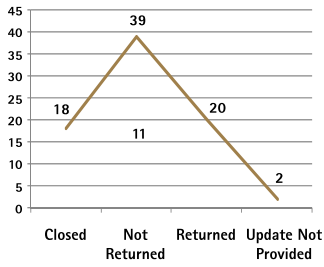
RETURN SCENARIO TRAFFICKED CASES



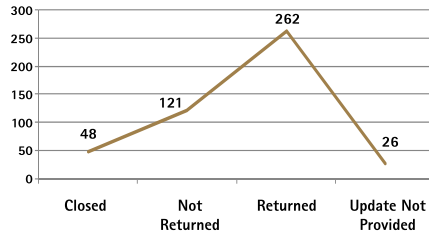
- Total Trafficked Cases
- Total Return

**GRAPHS 20 & 21**

**CURRENT STATUS - FEMALE TRAFFICKED CASES: AP**



**CURRENT STATUS - FEMALE TRAFFICKED CASES: AP**

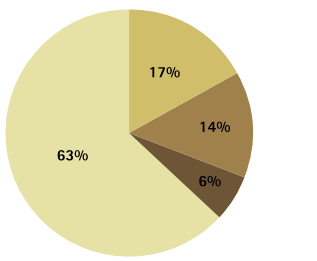


Graphs 20 and 21 capture the current status of girls/women in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, marked in MIS documents as 'trafficked'.

What is to be noted in both the states is that the bulk falls in the 'not returned' category – clearly indicating that many girls and women who have been trafficked as per their families and/or organisations that have sourced these cases remain to be reintegrated. This tallies with the scenario of return taken in its whole and was marked as a query point during field interactions.

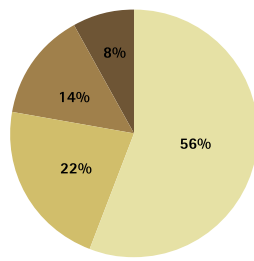
**GRAPHS 22 & 23**

**RETURN CATEGORIES TOTAL**



- Rescued
- Self Return
- Returned by Family Members
- Returned by Accused

**RETURN CATEGORIES TRAFFICKED CASES**



- Rescued
- Self Return
- Returned by Family Members
- Returned by Accused

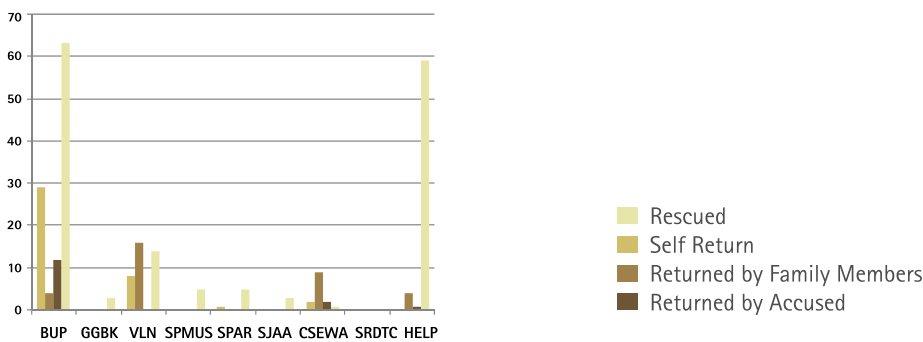
**RETURN CATEGORIES**

In this section, the ways and means of return of the victim/ disappeared person have been captured – both for all cases and for trafficked cases only. Graphs 22 and 23 reflect the proportions of the following types of restoration:

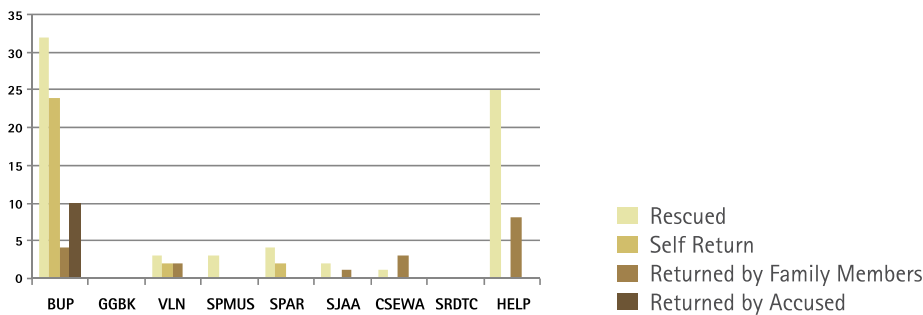
- » those who have returned on their own
- » those restored through the efforts of family members
- » cases where the accused have been forced to return the victim
- » those who have been rescued through State/ non-State / combined initiatives

**GRAPHS 24 & 25**

**RETURN TRENDS ACROSS ORGANISATIONS**



**RETURN TRENDS ACROSS ORGANISATIONS- TRAFFICKED CASES**



Types of return have been calculated both for total cases and only for cases marked 'trafficked'. While in both cases, most restorations have happened through rescue operations – there are minor differences in the proportion of different return types between total cases and trafficked cases, as captured in Graphs 22 and 23.

As far as trafficked cases are concerned, the proportion of rescued cases still remains the highest – but the percentage reduces to 56%, as against 63% vis-à-vis total cases. Self return increases to 22% from 17% for total cases, though restoration by family members remains unchanged.

The accused returning the victim increases from 6% to 8%. It is to

be noted, however, that for some organisations, there have been no cases of the accused being forced to return the victim. There are no such cases in Andhra Pradesh. In that state, there is no case of the victim returning by herself either. The distribution of return categories across organisations in the two states is captured in Graph 24.

As reflected here, the maximum number of rescues has happened in the BUP Consortium (WB), where the number of cases documented is also significantly higher than the others. However, the HELP network (AP) also reflects a notable percentage of rescued victims, though cases documented by them are far less than the BUP Consortium. Only for two organisations in West Bengal – VLN and CSEWA – the proportion of victims rescued by family members is higher than those rescued. In case of CSEWA, the difference is considerable. Cases of victims restored through creating pressure on the trafficker feature only in four organisations in West Bengal – in two of them (SPAR and CSEWA), the proportion being negligible.

As in the case of return trends across all cases, for trafficked cases also (Graph 25) – the maximum number of restorations is reflected by the BUP Consortium, followed by HELP. These were all noted as points of query during field interactions. SPMUS (WB) is the only organisation where all cases of restoring trafficked victims have happened through rescue and CSEWA (WB) is the only organisation where cases of family members restoring the victim form a higher share than rescue. Victim being returned by the accused features only in the BUP Consortium (WB), with self return also being the highest there. No cases of the victim returning on her/his own is reflected in SJAA (WB), CSEWA (WB) and HELP (AP). Not a single case of return of any trafficked victim features for GGBK (WB) and SRDTC (WB).

Throughout calculating these return categories – a question remained about the specific implications of being returned by the accused. This was, therefore, marked as a query point during field interactions.

### LEGAL STEPS

This section captures the status of legal steps taken for the trafficked female cases in both the states – as revealed by case documents. The entire procedure from lodging a General Diary (GD) and/or a First Information Report (FIR) to a case being started at a suitable Court, leading to conviction or acquittal is being designated by legal steps. As the following graphs reveal, the situation is dismal with not a single case of conviction recorded in the case documents and the bulk of the cases not being followed up by even a GD.

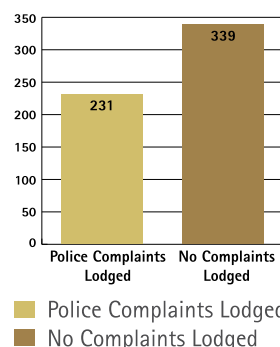
A point to note is that though there are many cases where no police complaint has been lodged – there are 38 cases where no GD was required – an FIR could be lodged directly. Of these, 23 cases of direct FIR belong to West Bengal and 15 to Andhra Pradesh.

It is important to note in this context that the proportion of no complaints being lodged is far higher in West Bengal (slightly more than 66%) than in Andhra Pradesh (27.5%). As far as lodging direct FIRs is concerned, that has happened in 16.5% cases in Andhra Pradesh and in only 5% cases in West Bengal. Graph 27 represents the situation with GD and/or FIR across organisations.

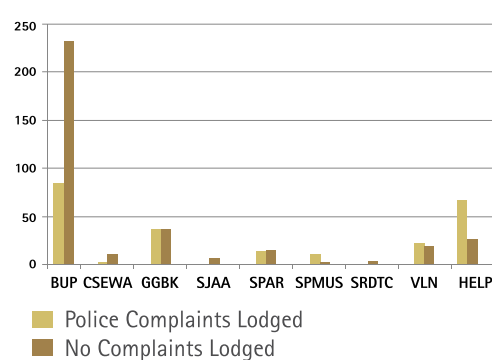
Graph 27 clearly depicts that Andhra Pradesh has been more proactive in lodging complaints, in comparison to organisations in West Bengal. Quite a few organisations in West Bengal seemed to have faced a challenge in terms of lodging police complaints.

The trial situation is also bleak, naturally, as revealed in Graphs 28 and 29 – since

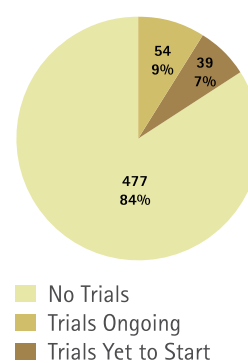
**GRAPH 26**  
**GD AND/OR FIR STATUS**



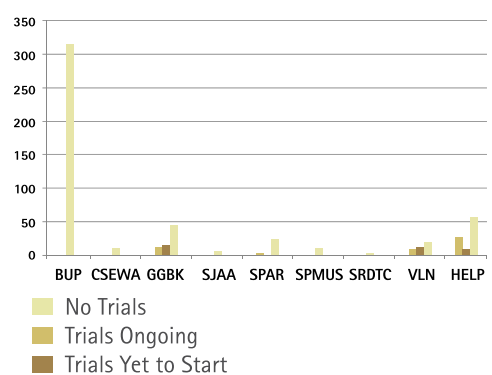
**GRAPH 27**  
**GD AND/OR FIR STATUS**



**GRAPH 28**  
**TRIAL STATUS**



**GRAPH 29**  
**TRIAL STATUS ACROSS ORGANISATIONS**



the bulk of the cases have not been followed up by any police complaint.

The grimness of the situation as far as legal steps are concerned was noted as a point of query for probing during field interactions.

Challenges faced by organisations working in source areas of children at risk of being trafficked were marked as a probe area during interaction with organisations. The role of the police, the Panchayat Raj Institutions and district level administrative bodies was also marked for special probe to understand this phenomenon. The attitude and practices of families and communities that might facilitate such a situation were highlighted as probe areas during field interactions.

## FINDINGS THROUGH FIELD INTERACTIONS

This section reflects quantitative outputs generated through field interactions, which have been presented in the same sequence as in the previous section. Only, the issue of gender divide was irrelevant for field interactions, since all cases related only to trafficked females. All quantitative information gathered from the field has been presented in the tabular format. All data presented here relate to 69 direct interactions, implying that all of this information has been collected through primary sources. As already presaged in the introductory chapter, this research was carried across 6 districts of Andhra Pradesh and 8 districts of West Bengal. Cases were distributed in these districts as depicted in Table 1 on the next page.

The issue of case categorisation should have been irrelevant for field interactions, since all sample cases were of trafficked females. In the course of field interactions, however, a different kind of case categorisation evolved as necessary, for not all cases were found to

be cases of trafficking at all. Accordingly, sample cases have been classified into:

- » Trafficked – perfectly fitting the definition of 'trafficking'
- » Could be trafficked – had not been trafficked, but there were reasons to mark the case as one of trafficking in terms of her vulnerability and the presence of a possible accused

The distribution of cases across these classifications is presented in Table 2 on the next page.

Table 3 relates to age distribution and has an interesting correlation with the data generated through analysis of the case documents. As Graphs 14 and 15 presented in the previous section depict – in Andhra Pradesh the bulk of the victims fall in the above 18 category, though in West Bengal – majority are in the 15 to 18 age range. It became clear during field interactions that the age noted on case documents reflected the current age, while the age range presented in Table 3 relates to the age when the victim was trafficked/ had left home or was married off. With this shift in perspective, it became clear that adolescent girls remain most at risk of being trafficked. As the table clearly reflects, most of the girls/women interviewed were trafficked or were at risk (except in 2 cases in Andhra Pradesh as described above) in the age-group of 10 – 18.

Table 4 presented overleaf captures the destination points for the trafficked/ at risk of being trafficked girls and women. It needs to be noted that the number of destinations would not match the total number of victims, because the same girl has sometimes been taken to more than one destination. It is also to be noted that in Andhra Pradesh, sometimes the destination is the red light area in a nearby city only. Out of the state trafficking cases were found to be much less in Andhra Pradesh. In comparison, trafficking cases in West Bengal are

mostly marked by destinations out of the state. Also, in some cases no destination points could be located as the victims were restored in transit. For such cases, the destination has been marked as 'not applicable' (NA).

The few transit points that could be identified in course of field interactions in both the states are listed below. The question of transit point is mostly irrelevant for Andhra Pradesh, since the trafficking is mostly within short distances, needing no transit point. For West Bengal, all cases of out-of-the-state migration from the districts of Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24 Parganas, Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas have Kolkata as the transit point, since they were made to board the trains from Howrah station. For the northern districts of Coochbehar and Jalapiguri – Alipurduar emerged to be that transit point. Kishanganj (in Bihar, but adjacent to Raiganj, the district head quarters of this district) was found to be the transit point for the northern district of Uttar Dinajpur. Only in a few cases, other transit points were found – Canning and Champahati for South 24 Parganas and Hasua for Uttar Dinajpur. These are places where the immediate accused, i.e. the local contact involved in the trafficking had handed over the victim to someone else.

Table 5 presented overleaf describes the types of return of the sample cases in the two states. In Andhra Pradesh, all the respondents were themselves the victims – whether they had actually been trafficked or were at high risk of being trafficked when they were rescued. This does not include the 2 cases which were really cases of child marriage, followed by domestic violence leading to cases being lodged with 498A and the marriage being dissolved. However, in these two cases also – the victims were the respondents, who are back with their natal families. In West Bengal, though, not everyone marked in the sample

has returned / been restored – leading to interactions being conducted with their family members only. Out of the 56 cases in West Bengal, 36 have been restored while the remaining 20 are yet to be restored.

As in the case of the base document, here also the bulk of the rescue has been through raids conducted by the police – though such raids have very often been conducted through the efforts of organisations working against trafficking in destination areas. Sometimes such raids have been conducted through networking between source and transit organisations. Cases marked as family rescue imply where the family has proactively managed the rescue with little help from the State. Such restorations have actually been at transit points, rather than at destinations. Organisational rescue refers to effective networking by the source organisations with different stakeholders, resulting in the victim being restored while on transit. The role of the police in such cases has been indifferent at best and downright collusion with the accused at its worst. Some of the victims have managed to return on their own – though such returns in many cases are temporary, implying that they are likely to go back where they have come from. Or, in case of Andhra Pradesh, they have returned – but are still in prostitution for a livelihood. In West Bengal there are quite a few cases of the accused being forced to return the victim to her family, though no such cases were there in Andhra Pradesh. Such incidents have happened either when the local Panchayat member has been very proactive, or when the local police has been pressurised by higher authorities. Return by others refer to different situations – helped by a customer/ someone like a driver or a sweeper associated with the brothel / other women in prostitution in that area etc. All of these finer points are detailed in the next chapter.

**TABLE 1**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF CASES PER DISTRICT**

STATE	DISTRICT	NUMBER OF CASES
Andhra Pradesh	Bishakhapatnam	2
	East Godavari	2
	Guntur	2
	Krishna	2
	Prakasham	2
	West Godavari	3
West Bengal	Coochbehar	4
	Jalpaiguri	1
	Murshidabad	3
	Nadia	6
	North 24 Parganas	26
	Purba Medinipur	4
	South 24 Parganas	10
	Uttar Dinajpur	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 districts</b>	<b>69 cases</b>

**TABLE 2**  
**CASE TYPES**

STATE	TOTAL CASES	TRAFFICKED	COULD BE TRAFFICKED
Andhra Pradesh	13	7	6
West Bengal	56	50	6

**TABLE 3**  
**AGE DISTRIBUTION (WHEN TRAFFICKED / LEFT HOME / WAS MARRIED)**

STATE	BELOW 10	10 TO 14	15 TO 18	ABOVE 18
Andhra Pradesh	0	3	10	0
West Bengal	0	20	29	7

**TABLE 4**  
**TRAFFICKING DESTINATIONS**

SOURCE STATE	SOURCE DISTRICT	DESTINATION	NUMBER OF CASES
Andhra Pradesh	Bishakhapatnam	Bishakhaptnam town	1
		Narsipatnam	1
	East Godavari	Penduratti	1
		Mumbai	1
	Guntur	Guntur town	2
	Hyderabad <sup>6</sup>	Anantapur	1
	Krishna	Hyderabad	1
		Tirupati	1
	Prakasham	Hyderabad	1
West Godavari	Vijaywada	1	
West Bengal	Coochbehar	Bahrapur	1
		Delhi	1
		Haryana	1
		Pune	1
	Jalpaiguri	Mumbai	1
		Pune	1
	Murshidabad	Kashmir	1
		Mumbai	2
		NA	1
	Nadia	NA	2
		Mumbai	4
	North 24 Parganas	Bangalore	1
		Barasat	1
		Bihar	3
		Delhi	1
		Haryana	1
		Kolkata	1
		Mumbai	7
		UP	2
	Purba Medinipur	Ahmedabad	1
		Delhi	1
		Hardwar	1
		NA	1
	South 24 Parganas	Delhi	1
		Goa	1
		Kolkata	1
		Mumbai	3
		Namkhana	1
		Pune	6
	Uttar Dinajpur	Dhaka	1
Haryana		1	

Table 6 in this section details the legal steps taken – if any, starting from lodging police complaints up to trials and convictions. As revealed in the table below, this scenario emerged to be slightly brighter than the grim picture gauged from the case documents. Along with legal steps, role of the Panchayat and of community members, as also of State authorities other than the local police and the immediate Court have been captured here. It needs to be remembered that the total of all the cases mentioned under each category will be more than the number of sample cases, as different steps might have been taken for the same person.

In Table 6, 'Others' refer to the involvement of other State bodies mentioned above.

Such bodies have typically included one/ more/all of the following:

- » The State Human Rights Commission
- » The State Women's Rights Commission
- » The DIG of the CID

All such involvement has only happened in West Bengal – as the table reveals.

The PRI in most cases refers to the local member of the Panchayat, while community implies neighbours and/or local clubs – who have taken a proactive role in forcing the local police to act. Also, in some cases such involvement has helped the restoration. Again, no such involvement was experienced in Andhra Pradesh.

The 'case not lodged' label refers to cases where no legal action was taken

– meaning that not even a General Diary (GD) was lodged, or there was no follow-up after the GD. The 'status not known' tag refers to cases where trial should have started since FIRs were lodged – but the victim and/or the family is not aware of any ongoing trial. The labels of 'case withdrawn' and 'case closed' have been differentiated, because the latter refers to the restoration of the missing girl – leading to the case being closed before any further legal action had started. The former refers to a situation where the case was withdrawn after trial had started. The how-s and why-s of each of these situations were adequately probed and those details are reflected in the next chapter.

**TABLE 5**

STATE	POLICE RESCUE	FAMILY RESCUE	ORGANISATIONAL RESCUE	SELF RETURN	RETURNED BY ACCUSED	RETURNED WITH HELP FROM OTHERS
Andhra Pradesh	7	0	1	3	0	2
West Bengal	14	4	1	7	8	2

**TABLE 6**

	WEST BENGAL	ANDHRA PRADESH
GD	45	4
FIR	31	4
Others	28	0
PRI / Community	15	0
Trial Ongoing	21	2
Case Not lodged	20	7
Case Withdrawn	1	0
Status Not Known	14	0
Case Closed	-	2

<sup>6</sup> The respondent belongs to Prakasam district, but she had migrated with her husband and children to Hyderabad, from where she was trafficked. This is why the source has been marked Hyderabad, rather than Prakasam





# 3

## **THE HUMAN FACE**

She and Her World

The Intruder in Her World

The Intruder's Work Process

State and Non-state Actors

Lost and Found or Lost Still

## CHAPTER 3 THE HUMAN FACE

This chapter attempts to put human faces and flesh to what has so far been referred to as 'cases' – on the basis of the narratives of restored victims of trafficking; of young girls who had left home to escape the fate that their families had determined for them and are lucky to have returned before they could be trafficked; of mourning parents and guardians who are leaving no stones unturned to get their trafficked/missing wards back, only to face failure every time. Also guardians who have written off their erring wards and accepted that she will never return. Even parents whose well-constructed narratives led the research team to believe that they had themselves sold their daughters off – a suspicion that only got substantiated by circumstantial evidence. And, girls/ young women who have returned from their in-laws' place in Mumbai to push the quality of her poverty-stricken natal family's life up by a few centimetres.

Each one of the 69 in-depth interviews held with restored/returned girls and women and with family members of those who are yet to be restored, combined with discussions with neighbours and other community members, brought to light a detailed and complicated socio-cultural fabric that allows girls from economically poor families to be trafficked. Specific factors that make the adolescent girl of one family more vulnerable to trafficking than her friend next door – who apparently matches the demographic and socio-economic profile entirely – have come to the fore through these interviews. Interactions with Directors/CEOs and social workers of organisations working in these source areas also contributed in delineating the scenario that makes these districts in the two states such fertile source areas of girls to be trafficked.

It also needs to be mentioned that the research team has made a deliberate attempt at capturing the psychological domain of individuals, families and communities – with a view to understanding the degree to which such psyches contribute to vulnerability. Response patterns, terms used, mode of response, tonality, time taken to respond and stretches of silence combined with the overall body language were keenly studied specifically for this purpose. In the following sections, an attempt has been made to capture these details in as structured a manner as possible. But, at the end of it – this chapter is about the human world – the world that adolescent girls from SC, ST and OBC communities in Andhra Pradesh living in situations of urban poverty inhabit; the one that teenage girls of rural Bengal belonging to families with no land and little assets grow up in. Those not interested may skip straight to the next chapter, for this one meanders through structures and the lack of them – much like human life itself. The research team, however, is convinced that not knowing these details would

adversely affect an understanding of the complex scenario that makes trafficking possible.

### **SHE AND HER WORLD**

Poverty was the one factor that may be called over-arching and all-encompassing as far as the individuals, families and communities interacted with are concerned – with the paltry exception of 4 families in West Bengal and 1 in Andhra Pradesh. Only these 5 among the 69 were clearly not living in abject poverty. There were variations, however, in the patterns of poverty. The first sharp demarcation is between the two states: in Andhra Pradesh, it was an experience of urban poverty while in West Bengal – it was rural poverty that stared the research team in the face. Within these binaries again – there were further shades and tints.

### **THE ANDHRA EXPERIENCE**

Urban development in Andhra Pradesh has led to a wide range of slum development, so that all slum dwellers live in small concrete houses with one room, one kitchen and one toilet. They also have access to basic amenities like electricity and tap water. Field interactions in Andhra Pradesh allowed entry into two such households in two different towns of two different districts. Both of these apartments had tube lights, ceiling fans, a wooden cot, a coloured television set and neatly arranged stacks of stainless steel utensils. Superficially, these slums did not reflect abject poverty of the kind that was experienced in two other households. One was a shanty made of palm leaves sandwiched between one two-storied building and a walled garden stretching as far as the eyes could see – obviously belonging to a wealthy family. This was in Rajahmundry town of East Godavari district. The other was a shanty made of flex banners, crouching under a flyover in the busy township of Gudivada in Krishna district. Seven of the other interactions

happened in organisational spaces, disallowing any view about the specifics of the habitats of the respondents. The remaining two currently inhabit an NGO-run shelter home, so that the question of understanding their household was not applicable.

Despite the prima facie difference between the slums developed through government initiatives and the makeshift room under a flyover – both the women in the slums and the one in the shanty were trafficked – reflecting that marginal differences in the poverty level do not lessen vulnerability to trafficking. It is, perhaps, the government imposed polish on restructured slums that cover up the similarities that these three women share:

- » Each one was married very young
- » Each one was trafficked – one by her husband, one by her stepfather and the third by a woman who lived in the area where she used to work
- » Each one is still married and each one is still in prostitution – because their husbands' incomes are irregular and prostitution is the only option they have, or so they think

Each of the seven trafficked cases in Andhra Pradesh presented the same picture of optionlessness, as the details below would reveal:

- » **An income-earning and supporting father is conspicuous by his absence for all seven victims** – one of them had no father at all, being the child of a woman in prostitution; four of them had lost their fathers when very young; another had an ailing father who was more a burden to the family till he passed away and the seventh had her father desert the family when she was very young.
- » **Four of the seven were orphans** – three of them lost both parents in childhood and the woman in prostitution also died of AIDS when the child was only 12.

- » **Family income patterns were irregular and inadequate** – of the three mothers who were alive to support their daughters, one was not engaged in income-earning while the girl's father was alive and remarried after his death, leading the child to be trafficked by her stepfather. The other two were engaged in petty jobs in retail shops – their income forever inadequate to support the entire family.
- » **Inadequacy of formal education** – only two of the victims had crossed over to the secondary section and only one actually had not dropped out of school till she was trafficked. Four had to drop out because of economic reasons and two because of marriage. None of them received any job skills training either, after dropping out of school.
- » **Early marriage and post-marital domestic violence** – four of the seven got married early, with three of them being married off between 12 and 13 and the other at 16. All four faced torture from husband and in-laws, with one of them being trafficked by the husband. Another was pushed into being trafficked as her husband would not allow her home unless she managed to bring some money from her natal relatives – which she could not manage. Another one was deserted by her husband, creating a situation of her stepfather being able to sell her off. The fourth got trafficked in her attempt not to live as a wife to a man more than triple (45) her age (13).
- » **Community tradition** – the eldest girl in the Pedda Dummara community by tradition goes into prostitution, which created the lack of options for one of the seven victims. Though she was the second child, her mother – herself a woman in prostitution – went against community practice and managed to get her eldest daughter married off

before she died of AIDS. As a result, the mother's madam auctioned the second daughter for the right of the first night as soon as she reached puberty at 12. The victim needed to become an adult to finally escape the clutches of that madam and shift to another red light area to continue prostitution on her own. It is by sheer chance that this new red light area is one where one of the organisations working against commercial sexual exploitation got in touch with her and helped her find an alternative means of income. Another girl got trafficked when she was brought back home for a year at her menarche, because that is a community tradition. There is also an instance where the system of needing to pay a community fine forced a restored girl back into prostitution.

- » **The internal turmoil of the adolescent psyche** – it is a lived-in experience that the normative socialisation process in India does not allow much space for addressing the natural turmoil that the adolescent psyche goes through. When such adolescence is lived within the constraints of extreme poverty, lack of education and the acquired/nurtured skills of conscious parenting – the non-addressing becomes even more pronounced. This leads to a situation where the natural adolescent urge to live better, to be appreciated, to be loved for oneself – combined with the incomprehensible psychosomatic feelings of one's budding sexuality – in itself becomes a contributing factor to vulnerability. The adolescent girl gets easily lured by promises that make the life of her fantasy seem accessible, with no one to explain to her the pitfalls of such allurements. Especially since the scenario otherwise is far too bleak to allow any dreams and aspirations to take shape. Two of the seven

cases offered classic instances of being trafficked precisely in such a situation.

When all of the above absences of options – economic, social, cultural and psychological – combine, they create such an oppressive situation of helplessness that prostitution emerges to be the only option for survival. Being trafficked into prostitution becomes only one incident among many others, each more depriving than the other. Rescue becomes equally meaningless, for prostitution continues with the only difference that the girls cross 18 in the process and become *adhiyas* with control over half their income from *chhukris*, where their income and life were completely under the control of their madams. Such a situation is so bleak that it remains almost beyond the comprehension of middle class minds where certain basic options exist as a part of the 'normal' growing up process. This

was a truth that hit the research team time and again as the field interactions happened. Three case studies have been provided to demonstrate just how grim the situation can be.

In course of this research, the research team strongly felt that the six cases who were not trafficked also illustrate all or some of the above factors that create vulnerability. It is purely incidental that they did not get trafficked. A redeeming indication that there are still some good human beings around who are not waiting to traffick those at risk – a faith that was almost lost in course of this research. The factors of vulnerability for these six cases are described below:

- » Of the six, one is an orphan who ran away from the orphanage because of ill-treatment by the warden. The escape was facilitated by a woman in prostitution who also worked as the sweeper in the orphanage. The girl was rescued by the mothers'

## CASE STUDY 1

Current age 19. Has two daughters – one 4 years old and the other 2. Lives in a restructured slum similar to the one described before and goes to another slum of the same variety to entertain customers. Has to do that because her husband is a daily wager with no guaranteed income. Belongs to the OBC community. Father had deserted when she was just a year old. Had to drop out of school at class VII, as her mother – an employee in a local stationery shop – could no longer support her studies. Started working at an STD booth where a woman befriended her, softened her with sob stories of how difficult a life this woman was leading and simultaneously lured her with the dreams of a much improved quality of life if only the 13-year old would listen to this older woman. That is how she got into prostitution. Fell in love with a client, married him, got pregnant – but had to continue servicing clients till the eighth month as there was no money otherwise. The same madam sold her off to a brothel-owner in Hyderabad, from where she managed to escape along with another girl and returned to the same husband. All of these by the ripe age of 17. That is when she became pregnant for a second time. Mother has refused to stay in touch with her after learning that she is in the sex trade. But of course, she has to remain in prostitution – for the husband she is so in love with, because he has married her despite knowing her source of income – does not earn enough. Faces regular abuse from her in-laws because they are suspicious about her 'job' that needs her to stay away from home three to four nights a week.

committee active in the red light area where she was kept.

- » Two of the cases are of teenage love and elopement. In both cases, the mothers' committees in the respective areas got the boyfriends booked under charges of minor abduction. It is hard to find anything other than the luck factor in the fact that both the males have actually registered their marriages after finishing their jail term, by which time the girls have also turned 18; are gainfully employed, and are living with their wives and parents. Both of them could have been like the husbands and boyfriends described in the previous section – using the 'love' ploy only to sell off these girls. Maybe that the vulnerability of one was higher than the other's, because one of them belongs to a BPL family, has studied only up to class V and was 14 when she eloped. The other comes from an APL family, was 16, had completed her school leaving examinations and her boyfriend already had a steady job in the organised sector.
- » The fourth, belonging to an ST community, was 14 when she ran away from a situation of extreme poverty in order to be able to find some support from the family of her friends to continue her studies and learn tailoring. Ended up with a stranger's family, who were probably looking for a suitable client for her – when she somehow sensed danger and took help of neighbours in that area to be taken to the police and be restored.
- » The remaining two respondents in Andhra Pradesh are also girls who had married young, faced post-marital domestic violence and have lodged 498A cases against their husbands and in-laws. No minor abduction case was registered against the boyfriends. One of the girls is an orphan – with both her parents and elder sister dead. Her

## CASE STUDY 2

Completed 18 and stepped into 19 three days before this interview. Belongs to the SC community. Dropped out of school at class V as girls in her community are not allowed to study after they start menstruating. Has always lived in a shanty made of flex banners under a flyover. Was raped by her cousin at 10 and was too afraid to mention that to anyone. Mother was away in Chennai at that point of time with her lover, later to become her second husband. Father died after marrying her off to a 24-year old when she was 12. This man deserted her when she was five months pregnant. At 13, therefore, she had to undergo an abortion that late into pregnancy. Mother took her to Chennai and engaged her as a domestic help there. She returned a year later. By then, her mother had remarried. That stepfather took her away at 15 in the name of engaging her as a domestic labour and sold her off. She managed to escape with the help of an older girl a year later and returned home. Fell in love with a man who sold her in Tirupati. She again escaped and came back home to marry her childhood sweetheart, who is an alcoholic and beats her up because she is a 'fallen' woman. They had a son, who died at 2 from a dog bite. She continues to be in prostitution in order to survive. Has adopted a 5-year old daughter. Wants to take good care of this child so that her future is different. Does not want to punish anyone, because her life is spoilt anyway and does not think it worthwhile to spoil the lives of the men who have wreaked havoc in her life. Narrated everything in a staccato voice devoid of all emotions – except at the very end, when she mentioned: 'There has been nothing to cook for the last 4 days. I have to go seeking clients when I can no longer bear my hunger.'

## CASE STUDY 3

Current age 24. Has a small daughter, who has no identified father. Lives in 'Satellite City' – the glamorised name of a slum restructured by the government. Belongs to the SC community. Had to drop out of school after class III as her father expired and her mother – working in a snack stall – did not earn enough to support both survival and education of her three children. Brother has since died and elder sister lives with her husband and family. She, too, was married off at 16 – only to be sold off in Mumbai by her husband. Managed to escape with the help of 'someone' – probably a customer, but she did not clarify. Returned and narrated what had happened to her. The community forced the husband into admitting the act of trafficking and imposed a fine of Rs 20,000/- on him. He migrated supposedly to work and raise the money and conveniently disappeared. She had to get back into prostitution in order to pay the fine that had been imposed on the trafficker, because he was her husband, after all!

mother and elder sister were in prostitution and died of AIDS. She had married at 15 and again – it is sheer luck that her husband was only abusive and did not sell her off. The other girl also married at 15, but she took care to get both families into accepting the marriage. That did not stop her husband and in-laws from torturing her because she did not bring any dowry. The research team has been unable to locate anything other than good fortune that her marital family did not consider selling her off into prostitution as compensation against the loss of dowry.

The overall experience from Andhra Pradesh painted the picture of a rather closed society where girls from SC, ST and OBC communities grow up in abject poverty with the father very often not earning much, if anything at all – if he is around, in the first place. Mothers get into prostitution to run the family. The homemaker prostituting herself for her husband and children is thus a well-established archetype that many of these girls grow up with. This also contributes to the loss of the mother at an early age – with such mothers often dying of AIDS. Community norms are strong and binding and seldom work in favour of girls. Marriage at the onset of puberty is rampant; so is the urge among teenage girls to elope and marry with the dream of escaping the dreary life that they live. *(Out of the 13 girls and women, only three were unmarried – one of them because she is an orphan growing up in an institutionalised situation. Maybe it is of some significance that the other two are Christians. More than 46% of the respondents were married before 15.)* Studies get discontinued either because of poverty or because of community norms. And, the world outside teems with those who know exactly how to trap these girls if they dare to dream of a better quality of life. Any girl born into these situations is a potential

victim – the act of trafficking being just one incident among a stream of other deprivations. Not much really changes in one's life because of that incident.

It is possible to argue that no deductions of any value about the life situation of adolescent girls and young women in Andhra Pradesh – especially those belonging to SC, ST and OBC communities – can be made on the basis of just 13 lives. Undoubtedly, 13 lives out of a huge mass of humanity do not allow one to make generalisations with any reasonable claim of high probability. But, that is true only when the realities captured here are taken as the experiences of 13 individuals. The research team has felt that the respondents were representatives – rather than individuals. The presence of young women aged 18/19 engaged in prostitution in the areas where the interviews took place; the references to other girls and women in the narratives of the respondents as also of the organisational directors and frontline workers; the tone, attitudes and body language of the respondents, their relatives and neighbours, of the organisation's frontline workers – all of these have contributed to formulating the overall experience as presented here.

#### THE WEST BENGAL REALITIES

West Bengal, however, presents a different picture. Vulnerability factors are certainly comparable, but the incident of trafficking is not as devoid of real impact as in Andhra Pradesh. Lives do change when one gets trafficked – mostly for worse, but there have been at least 4 cases where the impact has been positive. The percentage is statistically insignificant, but it has helped the research team to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

It has already been mentioned that respondents in Andhra Pradesh were found to be in urban locations, while those in West Bengal were from a rural background. Another notable difference

is that the interviews in Andhra Pradesh happened against a backdrop of prostitution. With the exception of one respondent, and the two women currently resident at a shelter home, all others were found to be living in areas where prostitution is a known practice – irrespective of whether the respondent is practising it. The West Bengal scenario was completely different. Interviews happened in rural Bengal against a backdrop of domesticity. The only interviews that happened in towns were of girls/women currently residing at shelter homes – but they, too, come from rural backgrounds.

The villages visited in course of this research were found to be mostly away from major cities of the state, though some of them are near small district townships and/or tourist spots while others were really remote, interior villages. Some of the villages in four of the districts are located near the international border with neighbouring Bangladesh. While each district was found to have its own distinct characteristics – there were certain notable similarities also. Urbanisation has hardly touched these villages – except for the omnipresence of mobile phones. The only other mass media that had some degree of presence was transistor radio. Television – ubiquitous in its presence in Andhra Pradesh – was a rarity. Daily living is characterised by a laidback attitude, as opposed to the hustle and bustle of urban living experienced in Andhra Pradesh. Village communities are ruled by strict codes of conduct for children and adults, girls and boys, men and women. A car appearing on a village road still attracts the entire village, with children running behind and then crowding around it while adults would gradually gather on the courtyard where the research team had arrived. People would casually ask who the team members were, where they were coming from, who they were to meet and why – without the slightest

feelings of being nosy. A situation that would, by logical deduction, imply that for a complete outsider to achieve anything there without being noticed is virtually impossible.

One remarkable feature, however, was the high degree of mobility and migration for income earning reasons. Boys and men of course move more often than their female counterparts, but girls and women are not completely absent either. Patterns of mobility and migration are varied, though. Members of both genders of different age-groups living in villages on railway routes commute daily to nearby towns and not so near cities for petty businesses like vending fruits, vegetables and fish; for masonry and construction work; for finding artisan skill-based work like carpentry; and as domestic help. This is particularly common in the districts of North and South 24 Parganas, both of which are adjacent to the state capital. Sometimes the migration is seasonal and the destinations can be anything from Kolkata to Mumbai or Andhra Pradesh or Kashmir. Basically, anywhere in India. Womenfolk are not entirely absent from such seasonal migration, though they travel more in case of family migration, rather than single migration. There are also some cases of semi-permanent migration, mostly for males, who only return home for festivals and/or special family occasions.

The flipside of such extensive mobility and migration is the absence of employment and income-earning opportunities in local situations. Rural Bengal still has an agro-based economy, where landless labourers and marginal farmer families find it very difficult to earn enough for survival. Instances of families benefiting from the hugely advertised NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) were few and far between among the families interacted with in course of this research. The few forms of home-based cottage industrial occupations

were mostly found to be excruciatingly strenuous and ill-paying. *Bidi* making, making ropes from dried coconut-skin fibres, hand embroidery and *zari* work, weaving *gamchhas* (indigenous towels) on handlooms and rearing goats, chicken and ducks were found to be such industries.

Among the adolescent girls/ young women and/or their families interacted with against the backdrop described above – 50 were cases of trafficking while 6 were not, as already reflected in the previous chapter. It needs to be reiterated that 'could be trafficked' implies that these individuals have incidentally not been trafficked, though it might well have been so, insofar as the circumstances of their moving away are concerned. Of the 50 cases of trafficking, 3 have been re-trafficked. In-depth interviews were conducted with 23 of the 36 restored girls/ young women. The reasons behind the inability to interact directly with the remaining 13 were varied:

- » Some have been married; while the natal family was willing to respond – the girls/women were not accessible themselves
- » Some were away from home at the time of the interview – either because she is currently living with a relative to escape intimidation by the accused, or because she had gone out for the day to a relative's place nearby, or because she had migrated for some time out of the state on work
- » Some of the girls currently residing at government homes could not be accessed, as we could not secure permission to meet them

It would be pertinent here also to mention that some of the incidents of 'marriage' outside the state have enough circumstantial evidence to strongly indicate the legitimisation of trafficking for prostitution, rather than anything else.

As presaged earlier, poverty is an omnipresent phenomenon, with only 4 out of the 56 families not belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. Irrespective of whether a family has a BPL card, the starkness of rural poverty was easily visible to the naked eye – though there were degree differences within such starkness also. An overwhelming majority (with the exception of 3) of the families are landless – engaged in daily wage earning through the kinds of activities described at the outset of this section. Specific income-earning activities of the families interacted with are as follows:

- » Agricultural labour – both men and women; also boys and girls
- » Coconut plucking – men
- » Trawler fishing – men
- » NREGA activities – only one woman was found to be engaged
- » Van rickshaw pulling – men
- » Embroidery and *zari* work – both men and women, also boys and girls
- » Rope making – entire family
- » Goat, chicken and duck rearing – entire family
- » Handloom weaving – men
- » Tailoring – men
- » Vending – men and women
- » Goat supply to the butchery market (large scale) – men
- » Truck driving – men
- » Begging – women
- » Domestic labour – girls
- » Fish processing – girls
- » *Bidi* making – entire family
- » Sand and gravel gathering on riverbeds – men and women, boys and girls
- » Tea garden labour – men and women

Apart from these, mostly adolescent boys and young men, but sometimes entire families, migrate seasonally for construction work (UP) and work in cardboard factories (AP) or for any kind of petty engagement in cities like Mumbai and Delhi. Commuting daily to nearby cities to work in small-scale industries and as domestic labour is very common among girls in the south

Bengal districts. So is migrating to work as domestic labour in cities like Delhi and Mumbai. Mobility for adolescent girls was found to be less in the northern districts of Uttar Dinajpur, Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri, in comparison to the southern districts. Such mobility has been found to be highest in the districts of North and South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur – all three of them being not too far from Kolkata, the state's capital.

Such mobility, however, should not be taken to indicate much freedom of choice for adolescent girls growing up in these villages. One could start with the phenomenon of formal education. Of the 56 girls and women, 14 had crossed the primary level to study beyond class V – constituting 25% only. An equal number are barely literate; another 14 have not received any formal education; and the remaining 14 have not continued beyond the primary level. Just four of them are still continuing their studies – barely 7%. What is much more disturbing than these numbers is that – not receiving formal education and/or dropping out of school without crossing the primary level were never mentioned as anything significant. The suggestion, rather, was that such lack of formal education and/or discontinuing between classes III and V were normal events in life that did not merit much discussion into the why-s of it. Only some of the girls/women themselves had attached any importance at all to the fact that they had studied / are studying beyond class V. Except for two families, none of the others expressed any appreciation for this either.

The reason behind such disinterest is obvious in the list of occupations that girls and women engage in – there is not a single one that has much to do with formal education. Even from the income earning point of view – the world of opportunities that opens up if one crosses class VIII, the additional

opportunities that become accessible if one crosses class X, remain totally unknown to the rural world where these girls grow up. Any entry into the formal labour market does not even feature in their dreams, therefore.

Few things do, actually. As also clear from the list of income-earning activities available to girls and women in rural areas – not much skilled labour is required in any of them. A fact substantiated by the finding that none of these girls and/or their families with no formal education / bare literacy / primary level education displayed any information about the much-touted Kishori Shakti Yojana scheme for adolescent girls – let alone receiving any skills training related to income earning. What these two factors indicate in combination is that the scope of becoming someone earning a decent income through engagement in the formal sector and/or through offering skilled labour is not a reality in the lives of the girls and women being referred to.

Given the situation of stark poverty that characterises their world, it is natural that these girls would want to move towards an economically better life – a yearning that their reality hardly allows them to reach out to. The average life that awaits them – what they experience all around them – is marriage to a similarly poor family at the age of 15/ 16 (families arranging marriages below 15 was found to be a rarity) and facing the same situation of semi-starvation for the rest of their lives, with the addition of repeated pregnancies, varying degrees of domestic violence – if not desertion by the husband and even more distress, therefore. In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that an adolescent psyche would be tempted by the prospect of better income-earning opportunities – an entrapment factor that has led to 25 of the 56 to be trafficked.

The other aspect of the natural human quest for a better quality of life is that

of emotional gratification – the craving to be loved, cherished, appreciated – to have that someone with whom one can 'live happily ever after'. When a girl grows up hearing her parents worry about how to collect the dowry to marry off daughters, when her daily life consists of nothing more exciting than doing house chores and taking care of siblings and participating in some economic activity that the family allows her to, when the lives of her married sisters/relatives/contemporaries, of her mother and sister-in-law prohibits her from dreaming anything like a happy life that her adolescent heart craves – it is not surprising that so-called love and marriage constitute the other most important entrapment factor. A total of 10 of the 56 were trafficked under the guise of love and marriage, and an additional two were lured by promises of both marriage and better employment opportunity.

It needs to be remembered in this context that the world being referred to is one that has extremely limited access to the world outside the daily boundaries constituted by the location of one's own village and that of one or more similar villages where other relatives live. This non-exposure keeps both the girl and her family unaware about the possible dangers of her going away with someone for work – since that someone is never an unknown person, except in cases of straightforward abduction. In addition, as mentioned earlier, exposure to migration for work is already available to these villages – making any apprehension of danger seem even more remote. Credulity – a readiness to believe whatever is being said – is a feature that strongly struck the research team, along with which came the understanding of how such credulity is efficiently and effectively used by traffickers.

The point above is possibly well demonstrated by a mother allowing her second daughter and two younger sons to



go away with her son-in-law, a man her elder daughter had 'married' in Mumbai after being taken there by a neighbour for 'domestic' work. That, too, after this man had come to this rural family for the first time with his 'wife' seriously unwell. It was later discovered that she was HIV+ and at a stage where little of her young life was left. Her death and the return of the two boys made the mother realise that her second daughter might be in danger. But by then, it was far too late. This girl remains untraced till date.

The above is just one of the examples. Every family reflected this same readiness to believe that the prospect of a better life being offered to them in the form of an employment opportunity or a dowry-less marriage for one of their girls is simply there to grab – when offered by someone known. Even when there is a family next door whose girl had gone with this same person only to disappear. 'She has married someone at her workspace and is happy' – is accepted readily. Much probing – combined with careful observations of the promptness (or the lack of it) of responses, of the tone and body language, comments thrown in by the neighbours gathered around – got the research team to accept that with the exceptions of a few parents, the families actually believed what they said. Their simplicity – so massive that it borders on being a near-total lack of any understanding of the real world – is genuine. Little surprise then, that a 14-year old, desperate to continue her studies that had been stopped because of an accident that crippled her father and threw her in the role of the chief earner for the family – would go to the nearest big town with the belief that such a big town would surely have someone kind enough to give her food, clothing and shelter, along with allowing her to go to school, if she did all their housework free of cost.

One is reminded at this point of a 13-year old girl recently restored from UP.

Between the 15 year old 'trafficker' and the 13 year old 'restored from trafficking' girls – the two possible worlds of adolescent girls in rural Bengal were captured in picture perfection: One that offers nothing more than economic poverty and social tedium that fails to present any event whatsoever to look forward to. The other – a life that allows ready cash in hand; items like fancy dresses; cosmetics and junk jewellery – though that may well be at the cost of losing one's innocence to a different form of exploitation the significance of which may not yet be clear to the adolescent girl.

She had been trafficked to perform in a dance troupe. She sat surrounded by her parents and sisters, some neighbours and two organisational workers as she went on to narrate her experiences to the research team. The team shuddered, in fact – as she casually and fluently described in specific details the kind of dresses she was made to wear, the kinds of movements that she had been taught, the responses of the spectators . . . descriptions with explicitly sexual connotations that this young mind had not yet learnt the significance of. But, she had been curious enough to find out what made her 15-year old neighbour, who had gone to work in UP a year and a half ago, could be doing to return with such goodies. Not surprising at all, if one remembers the bleak drudgery of her world.

If hers is taken as a case of good fortune that she could be restored before she had to lose her pre-puberty innocence, one needs to remember in this connection the other girl – trafficked herself at 13+, she returned a couple of years later to her village as a trafficker herself and returned with three more girls – luring them with the picture she painted of her world – a 'husband' who was fair in comparison to an average Bengali complexion, both of them dressed in clothes that these village belles had never seen, as they

do not even have access to television or cinema, loads of accessories in the form of cosmetics and junk jewellery . . . All in all, a world that the three in the village had never dreamt of having. Between the 15-year old 'trafficker' and the 13-year old 'restored from trafficking' girls – the two possible worlds of adolescent girls in rural Bengal were captured in picture perfection: One that offers nothing more than economic poverty and social tedium that fails to present any event whatsoever to look forward to. The other – a life that allows ready cash in hand; items like fancy dresses, cosmetics and junk jewellery – though that may well be at the cost of losing one's innocence to a different form of exploitation the significance of which may not yet be clear to the adolescent girl.

Caught between these two worlds – the simple-minded, credulous, unexposed adolescent girl falls an easy prey to the lures of a better life through employment or marriage, her family equally believing. This becomes even easier if there are too many sisters and the eldest feels it is her responsibility to share the family's income-earning needs – just as a brother would have done. Alternately, marriage without dowry for the youngest sister becomes especially covetable as the family is often still recovering from the

debt-burden of marrying off the other daughters. If it happens to be a woman-headed household, with the woman doing everything she can to run the show, but internally nurtures the thought that she is helpless because 'there is no male to protect' her – the trafficker has an even easier control. The woman's lack of faith in herself contributes to the trafficker's skills of convincing. It was hard to miss that trafficking happened more from women-headed households and/or during specific seasons when the menfolk of a family migrate for work outside the state.

On the other side is the curious, the spirited adolescent – the one who feels claustrophobic in her world and is forever looking for some channel of freedom for her inquisitive mind. The constant scorn faced from family and community for being too much of a tomboy and regular rebuke for breaking norms do not help her either. For her, this unbridled spirit raring to break free becomes the internal push factor for trafficking. The pull factor can be anything from the lures of a better life to something as innocuous as going to the fair in a nearby town or watching TV in the only neighbouring house that has one.

Trafficking of adolescent girls in West Bengal, thus, happens in this complicated world that she inhabits, where the push and pull factors are many. The simple credulousness and the claustrophobic monotony of her life and the lives of others around her that she experiences daily is a strong push factor. Either she gets caught in deceit because she and her family can hardly imagine the perils that may befall her should she leave home alone for work or marriage. Or she gets caught in deception because she wants to see more of the world, explore other options not offered by her own. This has been the story of all the 56 adolescent girls and young women and/or their families captured in this research. Some of them have come

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back. Some of them have not. Some of them have escaped being trafficked – but, as in the case of Andhra Pradesh, they could easily have been trafficked, given their vulnerabilities during the journey they had undertaken. A journey always prompted by the simple and natural search for wellbeing – physical, psychological and social.

### **THE INTRUDER IN HER WORLD**

The intruder, i.e. the trafficker. Firstly, since this research was geographically located in the source areas – the traffickers profiled here are the immediate links at the source. References to other links have occurred in the narratives of responding individuals and families – but this research team has not had any scope of getting a clear picture about these other links in the chain, leading up to the ultimate buyer. Secondly, the profiles presented have been generated

on the basis of the descriptions given by respondents, combined at times with direct observation of the trafficker and/or her/his house etc. Thirdly, this report marks even probable traffickers as traffickers – implying that in the few cases where the girls could be restored before they could be trafficked, the person/s contributing to her undertaking the unsafe journey has been marked as the trafficker. Finally, the number of traffickers will not exactly match with the number of respondents, because in some cases the traffickers are not known and in some others – more than one person has been accused by the family.

The trafficker is hardly unknown in West Bengal, for it would be impossible for any unknown person to achieve anything without being noticed – as already mentioned in the previous section. Such anonymity, however, is possible within the situations of urban poverty – leading to there being cases of unknown persons, usually a woman, befriending the victim and then trafficking her. Among such unknown persons in Andhra Pradesh identified by restored respondents as their traffickers – three were women who appeared as a messiah with a helping hand at a critical juncture in the victim's life. A fourth was a family that offered shelter to a 'lost' girl and would in all probability have trafficked her if a neighbour had not stepped in to take her to the police. Among the other traffickers – 7 were men, mostly husbands or boyfriends and their friends who actually trafficked or could have trafficked, and one stepfather. Two more families and 4 more women have been named as traffickers. Among the families, though, one is the marital family of one of the respondents that had only tortured her. But, as argued in the previous section, they had every opportunity to traffick her.

In West Bengal – 46 men, 23 women and 3 families have been named as traffickers, with not a single one being

completely an outsider. The list of men is topped by husbands, brothers-in-law (elder sister's husband), boyfriends/suitors, neighbours, relatives and friends of neighbours. There are also cases of a father and uncles (mother's brother in one case and mother's sister's husband in another) being the traffickers. In a couple of other cases, the father was not the accused, but his narrative made the research team strongly suspect that he was involved. Circumstantial evidence also indicated the same. Of the 23 women, all are neighbourhood women, with the exception of one mother who actually sold her daughter to a brothel-owner. There is also another mother who has pushed her daughter into such a situation that she tried running away and is lucky to have been restored before being trafficked. The three families involved are also neighbourhood residents.

So, the traffickers in West Bengal inhabit the same world that the victim does. That is exactly why s/he knows the socio-economic profiles of the families and their mindsets. S/he knows where to propose employment opportunities in some distant city and where to introduce prospective bridegrooms willing to marry with no dowry – sometimes offering money, instead. S/he also knows the feisty girl in the village who is keen to break free of her claustrophobic world and explore. The determined eldest of a family of many sisters – who feels that she, too, can go out to work and improve her family's economic situation just like a son – is well-known to the trafficker. That is what makes trafficking such an easy affair at one level, but so terribly complicated at another – for the trafficker comes back to live in the same village after s/he is released on bail. During interactions, there were a few occasions when restored girls/women, families and neighbours casually pointed to someone walking by as the trafficker, or indicated a house as belonging to her/him. The situation is absurd at one level, for the trafficked (restored or not) and

the trafficker to peacefully co-exist – the former oblivious to the dangers of the same, and the latter powerful enough to avoid being outcast or thrown out of the area. There were only two cases among the 56 where the men identified as traffickers and/or the agent have been forced to move out of the area along with their families.

Where does this power come from? In many cases, through being politically well-connected. In other cases, through money power that allows a trafficker to boast – when caught and beaten up by the residents of a neighbouring village while an FIR for trafficking had been lodged against him only two months back – that the local police would do nothing against him, for he had spent Rs 1,50,000/- on them. He belongs to an affluent family of three brothers involved in supplying cows to Bihar and rides a motorbike without a number plate.

The money aspect was visible to the research team in some of the houses that were pointed out to them as belonging to the accused. Each time, a small mud house was being replaced by a biggish concrete house, where construction work was still going on. All these men had given up what they used to do – one was a tailor, another a barber, one used to run an electrical servicing shop, someone else dealt with seeds... In other words, there was no specific business they were engaged in to earn the money being spent on rebuilding their homes. Some of these men have families with children – sometimes daughters as old as the ones they had trafficked. Some are younger – fit to pose as an eligible bachelor working in a distant city like Delhi or Mumbai. Migration to such cities for employment being a known and accepted norm in the villages surveyed, families hardly find any reason to be suspicious. Girls, too, get attracted to the affluent lifestyle described by such suitors and elope, in case of the family refusing to marry her off to

someone living so far. Most of such men had once been residents of the same or neighbouring village, anyway. In only a few cases, the men who trafficked were individuals from elsewhere visiting a friend or relative in the victim's village.

Only with reference to two women identified as traffickers, it was mentioned that they were engaged in flying prostitution. About a third – there were oblique references. The exact words were: 'She has left her husband and come back to live with her father. She is engaged in some funny business that needs her to go off somewhere now and then.' This woman walked past the household as the research team was about to leave, probably to check out who had arrived there in a car. An ordinary woman in her mid-twenties, wearing her marriage bangles and the *sindur* – the only notable differences being that she was in a salwar suit and had her eyebrows plucked – neither common among rural married girls/women. A couple of other women, apart from the 15-year old already mentioned, were also non-normative. One of them was found to be an unmarried woman involved with a dance troupe, along with her sister. The other was a married woman, with both husband and wife involved in trafficking young girls from villages for dance troupes. The other women involved were members of regular families – just like the men. A friend's mother, a neighbouring girl's paternal aunt, a classmate, a woman living in the neighbourhood – mostly married, sometimes deserted by her husband. Except when they are the victim's own mother, as mentioned earlier in this section.

The only situation where outsiders have been able to traffick girls from rural Bengal is one where the girls are somehow involved in daily commuting by train for work. Befriending happened on the train – women luring girls with promises of better income-earning

opportunities and young men enticing girls with promises of love and marriage. Three such cases surfaced in course of this research – involving two women and one young man. In a fourth case, there was a vague reference to some neighbours seeing the trafficked girl speaking to an unknown woman before she went missing, but no further details were available.

The person who sourced the girls/women from their families was never the ones who had ultimately engaged them in prostitution. They were inevitably the tiniest link, which stretches up to an unknown woman operating in Mumbai, who had come down to the village from where two girls had been trafficked and restored – to offer a sum as high as Rs 5,00,000/- so that the case against the trafficker in the village is withdrawn. A woman described by the respondent as 'Sunita madam – a Bengali'. Another respondent named a certain Puja Devi as the one to whom she was finally sold. It was this Puja Devi who sent her to hotels and lodges with clients. She had one big house in Haryana's Jamuna Nagar where she kept all the girls and herself lived somewhere else. Her business must have been going very well, because she sent her girls/women to the clients in a chauffeur-driven car that she owned. No further details could be collected about the ultimate link in the chain of traffickers.

This section cannot be concluded without mentioning that there is at least one case where one or more policemen of the local police station were involved in re-trafficking a girl. She was handed over to her trafficker while in custody. Details of the case are provided in a later section where the role of the state machinery has been discussed.

## THE INTRUDER'S WORK PROCESS

The process is quite simple, actually. As referred several times, the intruder starts by befriending the victim. If s/he is

already known to the girl/woman, then the attempt is to deliberately deepen that acquaintance. If s/he is unknown – then getting acquainted and then becoming intimate. In some cases with the entire family, while in others – with the victim only. The bait is never cast till a degree of trust has been earned – except in cases of straight and simple abduction, as experienced in 5 situations in West Bengal. Entrapment factors are also absent when the trafficking has happened through core relationships like either parent, or stepfather, or the husband. The relationship in itself is what made the trafficking possible – no separate lure was necessary. This has happened on 6 occasions – 4 in West Bengal and 2 in Andhra Pradesh.

The bait, when needed, is offered against this backdrop of acquired trust – sometimes to the family, sometimes only to the victim, depending on where the intimacy and trust have been established. Entrapment factors are:

- » Promise of income-earning opportunities for those who are not engaged in such activities, or of better paying employment for those already earning, had been the entrapment factor for 25 girls/women in West Bengal and 2 in Andhra Pradesh. Cases of both entrapping only the victim, and of enticing the entire family are there. There are cases where the victims did not inform the family about the lure as she was sure not to be allowed to go. The entrapment factor could be known only after restoration. A total of 10 families had agreed to send the girl to work as domestic labour for a good salary, as promised by the trafficker/s. On 15 occasions, it is only the victim who had been lured. Interestingly, the kind of work promised in these 15 cases included manufacturing jobs etc – the kind of jobs for which people do migrate from these source areas, but either men or entire families, never just

girls. In Andhra Pradesh, both times only the victim was entrapped with promise of work.

- » Marriage or the promise of marriage was the entrapment factor on 10 occasions in West Bengal and 4 in Andhra Pradesh. It was only the victim who was involved in all these 4 cases. In West Bengal, though, in 2 cases the family was involved in the marriage – while in the remaining 8, only the victim was involved. It needs to be remembered that these are cases of trafficking under the guise of love and marriage, which is different from the cases where the husband – with whom the victim had been married for sometime – had trafficked.
- » Entertainment – like invitation to go to a fair nearby, an outing to a nearby town, or just watching television at a neighbour's place. There were 4 such cases, among which on three occasions – everyone knew, for the entertainments were quite innocent at face value. In one case, though, the incident is somewhat more complicated. A young girl, now residing in a JJB home in West Bengal, had gone to Delhi with her mother and was engaged as a domestic help with a family. Two men who used to visit that family had taken her out on a promise of site seeing in Delhi – a promise that does not seem to have been very innocent.

All movements out of West Bengal have happened by trains, except the one girl who was trafficked to Dhaka. Movements have happened by bus in Andhra Pradesh, except in the single case of trafficking out of the state to Mumbai, which had happened by train. Bus and/or big cars had been the transport used for travel from Delhi to Haryana, or from the Pune station to somewhere. Transit points have not been a uniform feature of all cases in either state. In Andhra Pradesh, the number of middle agents involved has been far less. In most cases, the trafficker

at source has been the one who handed the victim over to the madam/ brothel-owner/ hotel-owner who pushed her into prostitution. In some cases, the one who had sourced the girl was also the one who pushed her into prostitution. In West Bengal, though, there are instances of both direct selling to the final procurer and of several handovers in between. But, not all handovers have needed any stay at a transit point. Sometimes, the one who had sourced the girl/woman handed her over to the next person at the nearest rail station, where she was made to board the train that took her to the destination. Only in a limited number of cases, a one-night stay had been mentioned at some point in between, before the handover had happened.

One definitive point to note is the widespread reference to being drugged by many respondents. It is heard often in the testimonials of girls restored from trafficking that after a point of time they were drugged, so that they have no memory of what happened after that, till they came to their senses and discovered themselves somewhere – usually the place they had been restored from. There are mental health experts and development activists who believe that such claims are a ploy to repress/ not recount difficult details about what these girls had gone through; to what extent they had collaborated with the traffickers – unaware about what they were being trafficked for, etc. This research, however, has brought a different situation to the fore in West Bengal. Only the father of one restored girl, who was herself not available for interactions, claimed that she had been drugged and did not remember anything. But as many as 12 girls / women mentioned something about being drugged that should be paid heed to.

These girls and women did not hide anything. They discussed their experiences in great details, thereby eliminating the possibility of inventing

a story about being 'drugged' in order to cover something up. There are those who even talked about the rape and other forms of sexual abuse by their traffickers – either the one who took them from the family, or someone else to whom they had been handed over. Of these 12, only for 2 – the family knew where they were going and who they were going with. In the other 10 cases, the victims had not informed their families. Each one mentioned that they were given something to eat or drink – after which they lost control over their actions. They have not forgotten anything, but they could not get their acts together. The following excerpt from one of the narratives illustrates this succinctly: 'Something happened after I had lunch with them. It seemed like I had no will of my own. They dressed me in a sari and I was wondering why, but could not ask that question . . . I was sitting in the other room, all dressed up and they were telling my father that I'd already left for home. I knew I'm in trouble. I wanted to run out and ask my father to take me home, but my legs never moved; I had no voice.' In one case, though the girl has not yet been traced, her friends who were with her when she was taken away by the traffickers mentioned that she started behaving strange after having lunch with these men – an offer these other two girls had refused. They had felt that she was doing everything like a puppet, whose strings were being controlled by the men, and seemed not to know her friends.

The research team is of the opinion that there are high chances of some chemical being used – something akin to what is known as the 'party drug' in urban circles, which is supposed to have the precise effect that the respondents described: being conscious of what is happening, but being unable to take any action about that. However, this can only be substantiated through additional inputs from mental health experts and medical professionals.

## STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS

No discussion on trafficking can be complete without a reference to the role played by State and non-State actors in the entire process. The first arm of the State that one thinks of with regard to trafficking is the police, because a family's first task is to lodge a missing diary when they do not know what has happened to the missing member, and an FIR when they have definitive information about a trafficker. Given that this research was based in source areas, the role of the local police constituted the focus. Not much could be learnt about the role of the local police in Andhra Pradesh, because they were hardly involved. In the two cases where they were, the police did their part in terms of arresting the accused, slapping charges of minor abduction on them – leading to imprisonment for a year and a half. However, these were cases of love affair and elopement, as found out during interviews with the respondents. In the hard core cases of trafficking, the local police were not involved, though the police at the destination points had helped in the rescue of 7 of the victims.

### HAND IN GLOVES: THE POLICE IN WEST BENGAL

The role of the local police in West Bengal is indifferent at best and a direct agent of the trafficker at worst. Collusion with the trafficker is writ large in so many cases that it borders on the incredible. The various actions of the local police as narrated by restored girls/women and/or the families of both restored and non-restored girls are listed below:

- » The maximum that families have been able to lodge by themselves are missing diaries. Refusal to take an FIR without pressure from the Panchayat / higher authorities / civil society organisations working in the area / civil society organisations (like APDR) working in Kolkata has been the norm as far as the local police are concerned. Only in two

- cases, the local police was found to have acted without such pressure, one of them being the case of a comparatively affluent family who also has been after the police regularly. Further, this same family also has links with someone in the community who is quite influential locally. In a third case also, the local police acted promptly, but that is a case that involves illegal migration to and from Bangladesh and incest (the accused being the 14-year old victim's uncle – her mother's sister's husband).
- » There are cases of the necessity to involve the State Human Rights Commission and a case at the Kolkata High Court to issue an arrest warrant, because the local police would not act. There are even cases where the family had to send the arrest warrant issued by a higher authority to the local police station by registered post, because the local police personnel had refused to accept it by hand.
  - » Each of the other 53 families, as also organisations working in the areas covered in this research, mentioned that even after securing orders from higher authorities in order for the FIR to be accepted and the accused to be arrested – local police personnel would try to dissuade the family by talking about the kind of expenses they would have to undertake for the police to make any investigation for restoring the girl.
  - » There are instances of the police openly asking for bribe, on the ground that the accused have given Rs 30,000/- in order not to be arrested and the victim's family needs to dole out at least Rs 5,000/- for the police to arrest the accused. The accused is still free and one of the two sisters trafficked by him is yet to be restored.
  - » There are also instances of atrocities committed by the police on the victim's family, starting with insulting and abusing the father and up to threatening the mother (in her husband's absence) with dire consequences if the family insisted on lodging an FIR against the accused. Many parents mentioned that the police abused them verbally and accused them of being the trafficker themselves.
  - » The accused being released on bail between a week and three months was a regular refrain. It remains to be investigated how this could happen when trafficking in human beings is supposed to be a non-bailable offence, especially since the victim in most cases has been a minor girl.
  - » There are many instances of the police directly helping the trafficker. In one case, the police allowed the accused to escape with a petty case, when forced by villagers to arrest him. In another, the police were supposedly not finding the accused at home, after being forced to register an FIR against him, though he was caught by the residents of a neighbouring village two months later, trying to traffick another girl. This accused is the one who had boasted that the local police would do nothing to him because he had given them Rs 1,50,000/, when the villagers handed him over to the police. He was out on bail at the time of interactions with the family, though the girl has not been restored. There is also an instance where the younger sister of the trafficked girl identified two of the men who had befriended her sister; her mother caught them and gathered public support; a television channel incidentally present there covered the entire incident, including the duo admitting that they had, indeed, trafficked the girl. But, the police released these two on bail on the ground that they were not the real traffickers; they had only said so under public pressure.
  - » One of the police personnel in the local police station was so hand in glove with the trafficker that he went in civil dress to a nearby railway station that falls in neighbouring Bihar, i.e. beyond the jurisdiction of the West Bengal police, to receive the girl from the trafficker. The trafficker was forced to return her because the Panchayat had created tremendous pressure on his family. The girl could only understand that the person who had received her back was a policeman when he put on his uniform after reaching the police station. Further, the trafficker had threatened the victim to have both her and her father killed if she did not stick to the false testimonial suggested by him. This police officer's zeal to protect the trafficker was so great that he repeated that threat to her and took her to record her statement without contacting her family first. When interviewed, the girl mentioned that she has now appealed to the judge to change her testimonial. The officer has only been transferred to another police station!
  - » The best case is that of the police being the trafficker. A girl now 16, abducted by a politically influential person at 13, had to be restored when the SDPO finally took up the matter seriously enough to order the OC of the local police station to reach his office with all papers within two hours. The OC informed the family about the girl being at the local police station, but did not allow them to meet the girl – who was taken away to Alipore Court for recording her testimonial. After that was done, she was handed over to the trafficker by the OC and the family was informed the next day that her father had taken her back – a father who is paralysed and cannot move. This was recounted by the victim after she managed to escape and return to her family.

- » Higher authorities of the police have been found to play a more positive role in most cases, except the one presented below (Case Study 4).

#### AND JUSTICE FOR ALL: THE LEGAL MACHINERY

Not justice for all, obviously – going by the experience of this research. In Andhra Pradesh, two cases of prosecution and conviction for minor abduction were encountered. Both had originally been booked for trafficking; but since the girls – both above 16 – had categorically stated in Court that they were in love with the persons concerned and had gone with them on their own volition – the accused were convicted only of minor abduction and sentenced to a year and a half of imprisonment. One of the accused was himself a minor, and he received an additional one year for

theft. He spent most of this time in a government remand home where he studied and passed his +2 exams. In none of the other cases any legal action had been taken against the trafficker. One of the partner organisations in Andhra Pradesh, however, mentioned that they had experience of traffickers being convicted, but no such case came up either in the base document, or during the field interactions.

West Bengal, however, presented a different picture as in other cases. No reference to any conviction was available either in the base documents, or during field interactions. Only three accused persons were found to be in jail as a non-bailable offence has been slapped on them. One of them is a woman in prostitution, who was herself not around when the girl went missing,

though it happened from her place. The other two are men, one of whom is in jail because of a murder he has committed, not because of the trafficking. His wife, also involved in the trafficking incident, has been released on bail. The third is the case of the Bangladeshi man where illegal movement across the border is also involved, as is incest. However, even these three have not been convicted yet – the trial process is continuing.

In many of the other cases where an FIR could be lodged at the source, neither the family nor the organisation working there is aware of the status of the case – with the accused having been released on bail. Only in one case the role of the Public Prosecutor (PP) was mentioned by the victim and her family to be positive. In many other cases, families have accused the PP to be in collusion with the accused. Two such cases are particularly remarkable from the negative point of view. In one case, many members of the girl's marital family were booked for trafficking and the judge – incidentally a woman – had refused them bail since the girl had not been restored. But, as soon as this judge was transferred, by some magic all of them received bail. According to the family, the PP paid Court clerks to destroy all the papers against the accused. The second is a case where there are two cases lodged against the girl's husband and mother-in-law. She had lodged 498A against them before she was trafficked by her mother-in-law and has lodged a trafficking case against the mother-in-law after restoration. Both mother and son are at large, though, with the husband going around boasting: 'They only have a pitcher full of water while we have a whole pond. They have no chance against us!' A bragging that indicates the huge difference that exists between the economic situations of the two families. The man, incidentally, had raped this girl at 13 and married her only to get her family to withdraw the rape case against him, which would have been difficult

#### CASE STUDY 4

The grandmother is a daily wage widow, with whom the victim stayed since infancy. She had herself sent her granddaughter to work as a domestic help in Kolkata so that she could earn some money for her own dowry. Two girls had gone together – this girl and her cousin. When the cousin returned and mentioned that she had no idea where the other one was, the grandmother went to the two men – both residents in the same village – requesting them to get her granddaughter back. When they refused, she tried lodging a case, but the local police refused to take one. But, the grandmother did not give up. She approached the Panchayat, gathered public support and managed to get the traffickers to take her to Delhi. She loaned money to go there; stayed there for a month; was made to pay for her board and lodging on a daily basis and travel on her own expense to different places in and around Delhi – but to no avail. When she had nearly spent all the money she had managed to secure, she was desperate. The deal offered to her then was: 'Get us two girls of her age and we'll retrieve her'. She refused and returned. Finally managed to lodge the FIR and get the traffickers arrested. One of them, an alcoholic, died from cirrhosis of liver while in custody. The local police approached her, asking her to withdraw the name of the other one from the FIR. She refused, but he was released on bail after 3 months. She left no stones unturned – approached the BDO, the SDPO and the Women Protection Cell at Bhawani Bhavan, Kolkata. Only to be beaten up by a lady police officer there and asked to sign a bond saying that she had trafficked her granddaughter herself. The trafficker lives in the same village. The girl is still missing. The local police go to visit the trafficker at his home when he is there – so close is the relationship.

since there were three other teenage girls who were eye witnesses to the crime. The family has experienced the PP arguing for granting bail to the accused – not against. Incidentally, this PP is the one who had asked her to come and pay him Rs 500/- and she was trafficked en route.

#### PEOPLE'S POWER: ROLE OF THE PANCHAYAT

The Panchayat or the municipality was never referred to in any of the cases in Andhra Pradesh. In West Bengal, though, the Panchayat has featured variously – positive, negative, and indifferent. There are also incidents where neither the family nor the local organisation has approached the Panchayat at all. On two occasions, fathers of girls not restored had mentioned that the Panchayat would not do anything as their political affiliations were different. Given that the two Panchayats were held by two different political parties, it may be inferred that such a situation is not specific to any particular affiliation. Also, the claim by the respondents was that the Panchayats would be inactive; they had not mentioned any collusion or negativity.

That is not to suggest that the role of the Panchayat was never found to be negative, by the way. In two cases, the families had specifically mentioned that the traffickers were at large because they had the backing of those in power in the Panchayat of that area. In several others, there was an oblique reference to the same, though that was not clearly articulated. The respondent mentioned in Case Study 4 clearly stated that an influential Panchayat member was double-crossing her; while he helped her reach to different levels of the district administration like the BDO (Block Development Officer), he also pressurised the local police not to arrest the trafficker who is still alive. All these Panchayats belong to different political parties, clearly indicating that there is no specific colour of such negativity; the

only colour that counts is that of being in power.

The role of the Panchayat has also been positive in some instances. Gram Panchayat members pressurising the police to accept the FIR was mentioned by some families. Instances of the Panchayat referring a distressed family to the local organisation were also cited, along with doing their bit to pressurise the police into accepting the FIR. There were several instances where the Panchayat had created pressure on the trafficker/ the trafficker's family in the village, leading to the accused being forced to bring the girl back. In the two cases where the trafficker and his family has been forced to leave the village – that had been achieved primarily through the initiative of the local Panchayats. One problematic area, though, is that there have hardly been any instances of the Panchayat being proactive in pursuing a case. Even Panchayats that had coerced the trafficker to return the victim have then advised the family to withdraw the case / not lodge a case since the victim had been restored.

Two cases deserve special mention in this context, because of the questionable role of the Panchayat – a strange mixture of the positive and the negative, clearly reflecting the complexity of the scenario within which trafficking happens. In one case, the girl was trafficked while the entire family was in Moradabad for seasonal employment. She disappeared from their quarter while the parents were away. There was enough reason to suspect the next door neighbour, also from the same village. Failing to get the Moradabad police to even take a missing diary (as the family could not write in Hindi), the victim's family returned to their native village and approached the Gram Panchayat member. He had links enough with the accused to summon him through a call on his mobile; organised a *salish sabha* (a meeting of villagers, presided over by the Panchayat

member and other eminent members of the village, where the arguments of both parties are heard – a regular practice in rural Bengal) where the accused had to admit that he had sold the girl off and promised that he would restore the girl within a week's time. The girl is yet to be restored, but the same member has not done anything since. Further, he has discouraged the family from lodging an FIR with the police every time they wanted to do so. Finally, the FIR has been lodged – but no investigation seems to have happened, despite the family having mentioned specific details that hardly leave much room for doubt about the involvement of this accused neighbour.

The role of the Panchayat in the other case was found to be even more complicated. This is the case of the 13-year old girl who was raped by the son of an affluent family of the village in front of three other teenage girls also sleeping in that room. The family approached the Panchayat and a *salish sabha* was organised. The witness of the three other girls, combined with the medical test reports of the victim hardly left any room for the accused to escape his crime. The collective decision of this meeting, however, was that the man would have to marry the girl. When he refused, the Panchayat actively helped the victim's family to lodge a case against him and pressurised the police into arresting him immediately. The rapist's mother then approached the *salish sabha* members, who took the girl and got her married to her rapist in jail – without informing her mother, who was then asked to withdraw the case. Once the case was withdrawn and the man returned home, this girl from an extremely poor family started facing tremendous physical and psychological abuse, so that she returned to her parents. The Panchayat again helped the family to lodge a 498A case against the husband and mother-in-law, but failed to influence the police enough not to grant them bail. Released



on bail, the mother-in-law got the girl trafficked. After being restored, the girl has also lodged a case of trafficking with the help of the Panchayat – but both mother and son are out on bail, even though their offences should have been non-bailable and the Panchayat has failed to help the family further in tackling the corrupt PP who is supposed to have argued for granting bail to the accused – as per the responding family.

### THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY

In most cases in West Bengal, the family and the community's role has been found to be positive. Only in one case where the girl has been abducted by one of her brothers-in-law, her eldest sister – deserted by her husband and running her natal family – had said with a mixture of resignation and scorn in her voice: 'I no longer expect her to return. What do you think we'll do with her if she does? Have her for lunch?' The mother's first eager question to the research team, though, was: 'Have you come with any information about my youngest daughter?' With the exception of very few cases where the mother or the father has been directly involved with the trafficking, families have been found to be eager to get their daughters back – running from pillar to post for that. The father of a girl who is yet to be restored mentioned that he has already spent a huge amount of money accompanying the police in search of her daughter and was distraught to mention that he has exhausted all his avenues for securing any further loans. A man who runs his family through the meagre earnings of coconut plucking. Families indifferent to the girl's return were not experienced during this research. Instead, families of restored girls who have refused to be tempted by the offer of money by the accused despite their situation of semi-starvation were encountered. They are keen to carry on the litigation and have the guilty punished, 'so that they can't ever do this to any girl again' was a refrain that the research team heard

from many families. The team has also had to undergo the disturbing experience of parents breaking down in house after house of girls who have not yet been restored – even when specific information about the trafficker's whereabouts are known. In some cases, even the probable location of the trafficked girl is known, because someone else also trafficked to that same destination has been restored and confirmed that this girl is there.

The role of the community – as represented by neighbours and local clubs – has also been experienced to be positive. Many instances of the entire village going to the Court to testify against the accused were heard. Instances of local youth clubs nabbing the trafficker and handing him over to the police were cited. Comments by neighbourhood members during family interactions also revealed that there was no hushing up of the event by the family, along with revealing their empathy and support for the family from where a girl is yet to be restored, or for families of restored girls. The best example of neighbourhood support was experienced through a married woman in a village who remained unknown to the research team, but her good work was there to see. She had helped the family of a trafficked girl write letters to all possible bodies and dignitaries – the West Bengal State Human Rights Commission, the West Bengal State Women's Commission, the Governor, the Chief Minister – to attract their attention to the collusion between the local police and the trafficker.

The role of the neighbourhood and community has been found to be considerably different in Andhra Pradesh. As mentioned earlier, in some situations – a respondent has been found to be living against a backdrop of prostitution in the community, which has acted as a strong push factor for her being trafficked into prostitution. In another case, the victim's fate of being prostituted was pre-determined by her birth in the Pedda

Dummara community. Some communities have a system of levying a penalty on its members – either for a crime committed, or for being re-accepted after being trafficked. As described earlier, this has resulted in a restored victim having to resort to prostitution again in order to raise the money.

The Mothers' Committees and Community Vigilance Groups (CVG) formed by organisations working in different districts of Andhra Pradesh have also been found to play important roles in various situations, including trafficking. It was the mothers' committee members who ensured that a girl living with a woman in prostitution was rescued before she could be trafficked. In both the cases of prosecution and conviction for minor abduction, the CVG members of the respective localities had played an important role.

Finally, women getting into prostitution to earn for their families is so much of an accepted norm in most of the urban slums visited in course of this research, that the issue of stigma becomes irrelevant. Prostitution has become mainstream, almost, for girls and women from SC, ST and OBC communities living in situations of urban poverty in Andhra Pradesh.

### LOST AND FOUND OR LOST STILL: THE IMPACT OF TRAFFICKING

An issue that receives so much attention in the development sector from the international to the local level actually has very little impact in real life – or so it seems on the surface. One aspect that struck the research team sharply in West Bengal was the remarkable lack of stigma faced by the restored girl/woman and her family. As mentioned above, a girl getting trafficked is not a hushed up event; nor does the family lose the sympathy and support of the neighbourhood because of this event – irrespective of whether she has been restored. The overall culture of acceptance and inclusion works well

for the victim and her family. There was no secrecy regarding the place she was restored from, or the place where she is believed to have been trafficked to. Meera Road of Mumbai, infamous for its hotels and lodges that primarily run on supplying girls and women to their clients, Budhwarpet in Pune known for its red light area and other such places were openly referred to on many occasions. Fathers have referred to searching for their girls in red light areas. There have been references to 'clients' helping the restoration. The term 'prostitution' was never used, but 'wrong work', 'wrong place' were mentioned.

The community accepts the girl and her family as a victim – of deception/ force/ ignorance/ helpless poverty or a combination of all of these. The acceptance is most readily offered when the victim is below 15. A few stray references about the girl not being a 'good' one were heard for some girls above 15. But then, these were girls who had already broken norms in their tight-knit rural lives before being trafficked and were already marked as disobedient and unruly – traits unbecoming of a woman. But, such oblique comments were not found on a single occasion to lead to the girl and her family not being accepted by the neighbourhood. This acceptance, then, is extended even to a girl who has/had been trafficked because of disobedience to her parents, i.e. stepped into something on her own despite warnings from her parents – whether for work or love. The research team has encountered BPL families who have virtually lost everything in their efforts to locate their lost girl – spending on innumerable trips with the police to different locations, even when she had gone on her own.

As far as marriage is concerned, though, the incident of trafficking was found to be a closely guarded secret – not just by the family, but by the entire village community. Only in one case, the mother

made it a point to mention several times that her son-in-law has married her daughter despite knowing that she had been trafficked and restored from Mumbai. Notably, the local youth club of that village had played a proactive role in arranging this marriage. A father whose 14-year old daughter had been taken away by her uncle (mother's sister's husband) and has been restored with an 18 months old son, not only allows the girl to live in the same house as she did, but has no problem being affectionate to this grandson born out of an illegal, incestuous relationship. More importantly, there is someone in that village – a widower without a child who is ready to marry this girl along with her son.

That the life of an adolescent girl in rural Bengal is draped in neglect, lack of care and affection is accepted as common knowledge – but this lack of care and affection was not experienced in course of this research. Her life is certainly one of extreme drudgery and limited options, disallowing her to dream of anything better than the endless repetition of the same status quo that she experiences her mother and aunts and elder sisters to live. But, to say that the family does not care for her would be an exaggeration. The anomaly is that the life her family plans for her because they care is often not the life she wants. While this frequently works as one of the major push factors behind her being trafficked, not much changes in her life because of this – when she is restored. She gets readily accepted by the family and the community, only to be flowed back into the course of life she had wanted to escape in the first place.

This has been found to be the case with most restored girls in West Bengal, but not all. Both positive and negative deviations from this norm were experienced. A 15-year old has had to discontinue her studies because she 'feels awkward' going to school; she is afraid that friends

would ask her what happened. Another strong-willed girl has not managed to get beyond class IX, which is when she had ventured out with a friend in search of a life better than the one offered by the current one. There is a girl who has returned to her village after 5 years with enough money to convert her destitute family's little mud house into a concrete one. She is 'married' to someone living on Meera Road in Mumbai – a person whose surname she takes 5 minutes to 'remember'; her first reflex response to a sudden query about her intention to return to Mumbai is a sharp 'no' – before she collects herself enough to articulate that she would certainly return since her 'husband' and 'in-laws' live there; but not before the concrete house is completed. There have been others like her who have accepted prostitution as a way of life and returns home occasionally with or without their 'husbands'. The ultimate of negativity, however, is reflected in the 15-year old mentioned earlier – who was trafficked at 13+ and has turned a trafficker herself at 15.

For three victims, however, trafficking has changed their lives for the better. One of them currently resides in the JJB home of her district; the second one resides in a NGO-run shelter home for girls and the third one is in a government-supported working girls' hostel. One has just completed 18 and has been made the housemother to facilitate the continuation of her stay in that home. She has appeared for her school-leaving examinations this year and wants to continue her studies. She would have been unable to do this, because she had already dropped out of school at class VII, as she had to accept the burden of being the chief earner for her family. Moreover, her family – especially her mother – laments that her youngest daughter is growing old somewhere, without being married off as she should have been. This young woman, though, had clearly articulated to the research team: 'I have seen how good a life my

married sisters are living. I have no intention of marrying before I've learnt to stand on my own two feet.'

Another is a 13-year old who currently studies in class VII. A quiet girl, who had gone to Delhi to work as a domestic help. That is what she would have been doing at best – or become a child prostitute in some red light area, had she not been restored and put in this JJB home, for neither of her parents can be traced.

As for the third one, her latest rescue from a brothel in Baharampur, Murshidabad district, has actually been a respite from an inferno of a life. Both her parents had separated and remarried when she was barely a child of 3. She was first sold off to a brothel-owner by her mother and has been through several handovers before she was finally rescued at 16 in 2008. Her erstwhile experiences are far too traumatic to be recounted in detail.

Families also get impacted when a member is trafficked – despite the apparent placidity described at the outset of this section. Poor families become poorer as they first mortgage the house – the only property most of these destitute families have, and then loan money at high interest rates so that they can bear the expenses of the search for their daughters, or continue the case against the trafficker. Such expenses are many: travel and accommodation costs for self and policemen as different locations are covered in search of the trafficked girl; commutation and food costs for hordes of villagers when they have to be taken to the Court to appear as witnesses have been found to be the two most recurrent reasons behind the expenses. Their economic hardship is further amplified by the fact that these are all daily-wage families and if the father is moving or caught up in something else, it means less earning for days on end. The ultimate in this sphere is probably captured in the incident of a father committing suicide when he

discovered that his wife was involved in sending their daughter off to a journey that would take her to prostitution.

Families sometimes benefit economically, when their daughters – who have 'married' away – return with money and other goodies for the family. One example has been cited earlier in this section. One is reminded of another family that has changed its entire get-up. What used to be a dilapidated mud house, poverty writ large everywhere – as the research team was informed by an organisational staff – had changed into a house with two spacious rooms, newly thatched, having electricity, a television set, a DVD player and a couple of mobile chargers lying around. The daughter, rescued by the police from a brothel in Mumbai, has been 'married' to someone in Ahmedabad – a son-in-law whose full name and address remain unknown to the mother.

On the surface, nothing much changes in the lives of the traffickers also. They continue to live in the same village/locality – except in the two cases mentioned before where they have been evicted along with their families. Instances of an entire family suffering because of one person's act. It needs to be pointed out in this connection that the trafficker's family does not always support that individual. With reference to one of the families evicted, the wife and daughter-in-law of the accused had testified against him at the village meeting organised by the Panchayat – clearly mentioning that he had attempted to sexually abuse the girl concerned. The complexity of the situation becomes evident when one is reminded that these two women have had to move out with the man they had testified against. There have been other references to some member or the other of a trafficker's family trying to help the victim. One mother tried to stop her son from harassing the victim's grandmother and talk him into restoring

the girl. Another mother helped a victim escape from the 'placement agency' of her daughter, from where the victim used to be sent for prostitution. A wife who used to inform the victim's family when her husband was at home, so that they could go and pressurise him into returning the girl.

Another impact that many of the accused have had to face is being arrested and spending some time in police custody – anything between a week and 9 months, before they could get bail. Most of them, however, managed to get bail after 3 months. With the exception of the three mentioned earlier, who are in jail as their offences have been marked non-bailable. Since no convictions were experienced, assessing the impact of such conviction on the trafficker and her/his family remains beyond the scope of this research. This, in itself, is a serious enough impact, though – for it allows traffickers to get back into the same act after spending 3 months in jail at best. Unless, the trafficker has managed to bribe the local police so heavily that he can attempt to traffick a second girl within two months of having an FIR lodged against him for trafficking another – for the police had 'never found him at home' to arrest him.

One of the most obvious impacts on the trafficker is his/her economic prosperity, as experienced in some cases mentioned earlier. But, it needs to be remembered that the local trafficker is often another poor person who is happy to receive anything between a thousand rupees to 5000/- at the most. These are women and men who hand over the victim within the district or the state. Men who were seen to be building big concrete houses are all individuals with direct links to places like Delhi, Mumbai and Pune and they get anything between Rs 30,000/- and 60,000/- per girl – as per the accounts of the victims interviewed (those trafficked by such men and later restored).

In the U S Department of State's country report on India, 2009 – West Bengal has been mentioned as one of the states taking proactive measures to curb trafficking.

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When 56 cases spread across 8 districts of the state fail to reflect a single conviction and no reference to any conviction is even heard during interactions with organisations working there – the proactive steps mentioned in the said report fail to be convincing.

Some impact of trafficking has also been experienced in the lives of men and women who remained beyond the scope of this study, but were referred to by restored girls/women and/or families – individuals who were variously related to the scenario where the girl/woman had found herself. Several cases of young men from Bengal visiting trafficked girls as clients, feeling touched by their fate and then organising a raid and rescue, were narrated. The research team had even met one such man, now married to the girl he had rescued – a girl married before and trafficked by her ex-husband, who has a child. He contacted the family, got her relatives to travel to the destination and approach the police, who conducted a raid that rescued 13 girls in total. A driver who used to take the young woman to the clients had helped her escape. A woman sweeper of the brothel had helped another. Even other women in prostitution had come together to arrange the escape of a newly trafficked young girl. So, trafficking impacts even those who remain variously linked to the destination area, though they are no way part of the trafficking process.

The impact of trafficking on the State is hardest to define. In the U S Department of State's country report on India, 2009 – West Bengal has been mentioned as one of the states taking proactive measures to curb trafficking. Some reflection of that could be gauged in the positive steps taken by higher authorities of the police, by the West Bengal State Human Rights Commission and the West Bengal State Women's Commission when approached. The reference to one Public Prosecutor playing a positive role and one Judge who refused to allow bail to an entire family also match that report. But, counterpoised are innumerable local police officers whose atrocities and collusions were mentioned to the research team in specific details – complete with the names and specific posts held by the policemen concerned. So are many PPs who seem to be in

collusion with the accused, for they fail to prevent bail being granted to the accused, when trafficking of a minor is supposed to be treated as a non-bailable offence. Even in cases where the girl has not yet been restored. Also counterpoised are Panchayat members who remain indifferent, or even actively back the trafficker. Even when Panchayat members play a positive role in terms of pressurising the police in taking an FIR, or an accused into returning the girl – their next advice to the victim's family is not to engage in any legal steps, since the girl has been restored. When 56 cases spread across 8 districts of the state fail to reflect a single conviction and no reference to any conviction is even heard during interactions with organisations working there – the proactive steps mentioned in the said report fail to be convincing. A slight detour would be acceptable at this point to remind the reader that apart from the three girls/women residing in state-run homes, not a single restored girl was found to have benefited from any government scheme like the Kishori Shakti Yojana. The overall failure of the State machinery to respond to trafficking of children is captured in Case Study 5.

As far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, measuring the impact is far more difficult, since it has already been pointed out that hardly anything changes in a victim's life because of the act of trafficking. Four of the seven trafficked girls/women have had to get back into prostitution after being restored, because that is the only means of survival available to them, or so they think. Others have been restored and taken up life exactly where they had left it – without much changing there. One who was studying in class VIII when trafficked has completed her school leaving exams and is training to be a Multipurpose Health Worker. Only for the two women currently residing in an NGO-run home, life may be said to have been changed for the better, for they are learning some income-earning

## CASE STUDY 5

A 22-year old woman – emaciated enough to look like a 15-year old. When she was restored a couple of years back, she weighed a mere 26 kgs. A barely literate trafficked at 17 by two neighbourhood women who had promised her and her family a good employment opportunity – an entrapment luring enough for a family of marginal farmers with three daughters, the only son living separate after his marriage. Thrown into prostitution in Ahmedabad, she was rescued through the Childline there and reintegrated with her parents. This HIV+ girl has been rendered more of a destitute since the entire family has had to flee their ancestral village because of a family feud. Father is too old and ailing to be doing much, needing her to be the main earner for the family – a responsibility she manages through odd agricultural jobs on a daily wage basis despite a high CD4 count. They have not been forced out of the village where they currently live, but neighbours know about her HIV+ status and avoid coming in contact. The only support this girl has received from the State is free ART (Anti Retroviral Therapy), which has been organised by a PLHIV support network working in that district.

skills. One of them, though, is distraught as she has three children whose news no one has been able to secure for her. These situations have left the research team with the query about the efficacy of the restoration-reintegration-rehabilitation process that allows young women of barely 19 (or slightly older) to remain in prostitution even when respective organisations are in touch with them.

As for the other six who could have been trafficked, but incidentally were not – only the orphan girl has found a better option in the JJB home where she now resides, instead of the orphanage with the ill-treating warden from where she had run off. Nothing has changed for the other five. One of them is awaiting a marriage arranged by the family, spending her life listening to her father cursing her daily for what she had done; two have completed 18 years of age and gone back to their husbands – who have in the mean time completed their jail term of a year and a half for minor abduction. Of the remaining two – one is back to her studies and the other to her job, exactly what they did prior to eloping with their boyfriends. None of the traffickers have faced anything,

since no legal steps were taken against them at the source. Rather, a community fine imposed on a husband who was also the trafficker has needed her trafficked wife to get back into prostitution to pay that fine – as mentioned earlier. Only two of the young lovers – one a minor himself – had been sentenced to a year and a half of imprisonment for minor abduction. This has, in fact, worked well for the minor boy who spent that time in a remand home, moved away from the petty crimes he had become involved in and completed his +2 level studies. The other has gone back to his job as a waiter in a hotel after completion of his jail term, since his employers rate him as a good worker.

The Andhra Pradesh government has a scheme of giving a compensation of Rs 20,000/- to every restored victim of trafficking. None of the respondents interviewed in course of this research had received that sum, however, the reason being one of the following:

- » She had no idea about this
- » She had escaped on her own and is, therefore, not technically a 'restored' victim
- » Not all the organisations were

clear on whether someone who has crossed 18 can also receive that sum

A rather strong impact of trafficking was found among the adolescent girls who attend the motivation centres run by different organisations working in the districts of Andhra Pradesh covered in this study. They are very aware about the dangers of going out anywhere even with an aunt or an uncle. 'When your own parents can traffick you, how could an aunt or an uncle be safe?' – is what girls in different groups had responded, when posed with this question. But they had no answer to what they did, therefore, to ensure that their own parents would not traffick them. Nor did they have any answer to the question on how to prevent a husband from trafficking her, in case of a marriage arranged by her parents – though they are all convinced that falling in love and marrying someone of their own choice is a definite gateway to being trafficked. Is a world even more closed and claustrophobic than the one these adolescent girls already live in is being created in the process of protecting them from being trafficked? This is a question that the research team has been left with.



4

**THE CHANGE AGENTS**

## CHAPTER 4 THE CHANGE AGENTS

This chapter seeks to capture the organisational initiatives at the source areas – the partner organisations that form an integral part of this research. It needs to be mentioned, however, that the role of the organisations as change agents have been presented overall, without naming any of them individually – for this was not an evaluation aimed at capturing the successes and failures of individual organisations. The aim of the exercise was to understand the overall strategies; the efficiency with which such strategies are being implemented; the effect they are being able to generate; and the hurdles that remain beyond the capacity of organisations to overcome.

It is possible to classify the organisations into two broad categories – some are individual organisations implementing an anti-trafficking programme in a specific geographical location; others are organisations who have come together as a network/consortium to implement the same programme. In Andhra Pradesh, the formation of such a network has resulted in the coverage of a larger geographical area – for the members of the network are all NGOs working in different districts. In North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal, the formation of a consortium has resulted in intensive coverage of a number of blocks within the same district, for most of the network partners are community-based organisations (CBOs) or small grassroots level ones working in the locality that they belong to.

Organisations work with a focus on prevention of trafficking at source, as also of protection – both prior to trafficking, to ensure non-violation of rights through socially accepted practices like underage marriage and other forms of physical and emotional abuse; and post rescue of a trafficked victim – to ensure reunification with family and rehabilitation towards reintegration. In cases of the family situation being non-conducive to successful reintegration, or the non-availability of a family, the task of reintegrating the restored girl in a suitable shelter home is also carried out as part of protective initiatives.

One of the most useful strategies undertaken by the organisations is case management, data gathered through which form the basis of this research. Various preventive and protective needs are being addressed by this strategy, though the main aim of the strategy is protective, rather than preventive.

The first step in case management is sourcing information about children – both girls and boys – who have moved away from home for whatever reason. Such sourcing happens through two avenues: a) organisational personnel systematically go out to



families in specific villages to collect information about children away from home; b) information about such children is brought to organisations by others. Variations have been observed across organisations in the efficacy of the second method. Adolescent girls' groups being formed and nurtured by organisations form an effective source of inflowing information. Some organisations have been able to channelise other sources – like *Anganwadi* workers and groups of community adults to facilitate such inflow of information. Some organisations in West Bengal have also been able to motivate Gram Panchayat members in becoming sources of information. In Andhra Pradesh, members of Mothers' Committees and Community Vigilance Groups formed in different urban slums (where prostitution happens and the organisation works with children of women in prostitution) constitute an effective source of information.

The steps that follow information being collected/received is documenting the details of the case; motivating the family to lodge a General Diary (GD) and/or an FIR (First Information Report) where the family accuses someone specific to have motivated/ taken away the child; getting in touch with relevant organisations if the destination is known; following up with the police to arrest the accused and start the trial process etc.

Another arm of the case management strategy is to receive information from destination organisations; trace and/or inform the family; facilitate the reunification process and then motivate the family to lodge a case, along with pressurising the police to undertake necessary legal actions.

The entire case management strategy is directly protective, but in the understanding of the research team – there are preventive elements in it. First of all, an organisation enquiring into the incidents of children being away from

home has a ripple effect in generating discussions and creating awareness among families and communities on the one hand, and getting the traffickers alerted on the other about his/her activities being looked into. Another aspect of the preventive effect of the case management strategy is in enabling Panchayat members to take effective measures towards prevention of trafficking. This research has thrown up that in many cases Panchayat members are willing to play an active role if they know what to do and how to go about it. Through involving them in case management, some organisations have managed to make such members aware of the role they can play not just in the protection of children already trafficked, but in taking preventive measures. In one particular organisation in West Bengal, the research team experienced members of a Gram Panchayat approaching the Project Coordinator to discuss how best to use some available funds towards supporting formal education for adolescent girls from BPL families, for example – a step that can prevent dropping out from school, thereby reducing chances of her leaving home for work, which is one of the major covers under which trafficking happens.

The efficacy of this strategy of case management has been reflected in different ways during this research. First of all, the fact that families can now distinguish between cases of a child being simply missing, or losing touch with the family after leaving for some work, and someone else taking the child away – that they can point a finger at a specific accused or at a group of them, as mentioned in earlier chapters – is in itself an indicator of a rise in the awareness level. It was mentioned by organisational workers that getting the local police to lodge an FIR against an accused has become somewhat easier than before – another marker of the efficacy of the case management programme. The linkages developed between source and

destination organisations is an equally positive fallout of the case management approach – both in terms of destination organisations being able to expedite the reunification procedure, and of source organisations being able to expedite the rescue process by informing destination organisations about the details available at the source end.

The most significant result of the case management strategy, in the understanding of the research team, is the transformation of anecdotal, experiential knowledge into hard data – specific information about children away from home, the reasons thereof, with such information making it possible to identify cases of trafficking where families point a definite finger at one or more accused. Cases of restored and reunified children are also documented, adding another dimension to hard evidence of trafficking being a reality in a specific geographical area. Such hard data makes it possible to identify specific points of advocacy with State machineries, which anecdotal references can never achieve. Further, it is this body of evidence that has made this research possible, the findings from which will, hopefully, inform future strategies for intervention – both at the local level and at a larger policy advocacy level.

The other three activities are prevention oriented, one of them being the collectivisation of adolescent girls into groups – a strategy followed in West Bengal. Irrespective of how effectively organisational personnel can articulate it – this is a strategy that has much larger thinking behind it insofar as it recognises the need for building the agency of those at risk. Given the world adolescent girls in rural Bengal inhabit, as described in the third chapter – this is also an indispensable approach since it provides a space for an adolescent girl to break away from her daily drudgery; connect up with others of her age; talk about issues that concern her – which

may or may not be of importance to the adult world surrounding her; learn about her rights and about the possible consequences of some of her actions for which there might be a push factor inside her. The efficacy of this strategy was visible to the research team during interactions with one such group, where the adult women sat surrounding the adolescent girls' group, evidently supportive, as their comments communicated – though they never once intruded while the girls spoke. Their body language and the overall atmosphere did not suggest that they were there to keep an eye. Rather, they seemed to look wistfully, perhaps wondering what changes could have happened in their lives, had they been collectivised like this during their adolescence. It was instructive to the research team to listen to a girl married in that village, originally a member of another group in a different village. She has not been able to prevent her marriage before 18, but she demanded entry into this group right in front of her mother-in-law.

In Andhra Pradesh, this same approach is implemented with both boys and girls in the urban slums where prostitution is carried out. The focus there is on prevention of second generation prostitution, so that children of women in prostitution receive special attention.

A third strategy followed towards prevention is awareness raising of families and community adults. There was not much scope within this research to experience how this is done and how effective it is. But, comments of neighbours gathered during interactions with restored girls/women and/or their families – as also with families of girls yet to be restored – did point to a considerable degree of awareness about the phenomenon of trafficking and the complex socio-economic factors that allow it to happen. Organisations also mentioned different strategies of awareness raising which

indicate innovative ways of resource minimisation/ effective resource utilisation. An organisation entrusted with the training of *Anganwadi* workers has made trafficking a part of the curriculum. Another organisation uses its campaign for DOTS (a State-funded tuberculosis treatment promotion programme) to include issues of trafficking.

As already mentioned, the Mothers' Committees and Community Vigilance Groups formed by organisations working in Andhra Pradesh play a preventive role along with a protective one. They identify possible victims and take preventive measures; sometimes their vigilance also prevents a girl from being trafficked – as cited in Chapter 3 of this report.

Some organisations have connected programmes of micro finance programmes for families and/or other means of generating livelihood options for adolescent girls as a preventive measure. The logic is: generating locally available means of income-earning would prevent need for work related migration, which provides cover for trafficking. Such programmes are also aimed at preventing the violation of other rights like marriage before the legal age of 18, apart from engaging school dropouts in skills-building and income-earning activities. Economic poverty being an ever-present factor behind trafficking, an increase in income-earning opportunities undoubtedly contributes towards prevention efforts, other than aiding the process of empowerment of adolescent girls. In the understanding of the research team, such empowerment is one of the most effective tools of enabling the probable victim to take preventive and protective measures for herself.

In the midst of this network of activities, one aspect has struck the research team as needing special attention. There is a certain degree of tight-rope walking involved in the way this anti-trafficking

programme in source areas is addressing adolescent girls' empowerment. Just as empowering the adolescent girl through informing her about the possible consequences of her action is one response – on the surface an equally viable response seems to be curtailing her mobility further in the name of lessening her chances of being trafficked. It needs a depth of understanding and a commitment towards promoting freedom of thought and movement for adolescent girls to realise the pitfalls in the second approach. Unfortunately, that has not been perceived to be the case in all organisations. There are organisations, and organisational workers, with rather judgmental positions about the do's and don'ts of adolescent girls. The inevitable consequences of such positions have been experienced at different levels:

- » Workers who believe in their heart of hearts that only bad girls get trafficked were perceived to have established a good rapport with the family of a restored girl, without having any communication channel with the girl/woman herself. This raises a question about the ability of that person in following up on the rehabilitation of the restored girl/woman. There have even been cases of the worker admonishing the girl for her dare devilry during an interview. The difference became rather sharply visible through workers who were experienced to have an equal degree of easy rapport both with the restored girl/woman and her family.
- » An extreme example of the flipside has already been referred to in the previous chapter. The research team has had the experience of adolescent girls' group members unanimously reflecting a loss of independent thinking – every measure of safety propagated being even more restrictive than the ones that already rule their lives. This is an aspect that needs special attention.

# 5

## **JUSTIFIABLE INFERENCES**

Profile of the Victim

Factors of Vulnerability

The Trafficking Route

Intervention Strategies

## CHAPTER 5 JUSTIFIABLE INFERENCES

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide the information bank that this research has brought to the fore. This chapter is the link between what the research team has come to know, and what the research team would like to see being done. It captures the inferences that can be justifiably made from the data gathered, so that steps ahead can be informed by those deductions. Such inferences have been presented here with reference to specific research questions formulated at the outset.

### PROFILE OF THE VICTIM

A sub-textual question hidden behind this one was: why does the girl from one poor family get trafficked and a similar girl from a family similarly poor does not? While the findings show that poverty is one of the over-riding factors, there are other psychosocial factors that also seem to create vulnerabilities, which is probably what makes some girls, within the same socio-economic segment, more vulnerable than others. Whether the incident of trafficking happens or not is also a matter of chance, determined more by the presence or absence of a catalyst, the trafficker. Rather, this research has thrown up a few cases of girls from not-so-poor families being trafficked also, needing a rephrasing of the initial sub-textual question into: what makes one vulnerable to trafficking – a question tackled next.

What would be the profile of the victim then? Broadly:

1. A teenage girl from a poor family, poverty mostly being of the extreme kind where semi-starvation is a reality
2. Usually a school dropout, or never a part of the formal education system, is responsible for domestic work in her home, with no recreation/ entertainment of any kind; usually 'in waiting for marriage'
3. Faced with sudden economic shock or breakdown in the family due to the death of a parent, accidents or illnesses, that renders the family deprived of its primary source of income; family rendered in dire poverty due to hefty dowries paid for an older sister's marriage
4. Faced with emotional crisis caused by separation or divorce between parents, remarriage by mother, sustained neglect due to death of mother or both parents.
5. Primarily from women headed households; absent father
6. A victim of child marriage; subsequent torture and/or desertion
7. Usually attractive looking, sometimes a shade fairer than the average skin tone of that area
8. Exposure to migration – because it is a practice in her residential area, or in her

family, or because she has herself migrated before for employment, with or without her family; also where the girl herself is an aspiring migrant (wants to get away and look for better opportunities, and considers any means – marriage or jobs, to escape her situation).

## FACTORS OF VULNERABILITY

The factors of vulnerability identified through this research may be encapsulated under three broad categories:

### 1. THE PUSH FACTORS

- » Economic poverty; sudden economic shocks in the family
- » Lack of formal education / job skills training opportunities or local employment / income-generation opportunities for girls and women
- » An oppressive and restricted life and the lack of any hope or opportunities
- » Dysfunctionality in relationships with caregivers/guardians; neglect, discrimination and abuse

### 2. THE FACILITATING FACTORS

- » Opportunities for migration; only through social networks and no structured systems or agencies with responsibility or offering support in migration; lack of opportunities for any information and/or assistance for safe migration
- » Consequent complete dependence on agents/conduits/intermediaries (traffickers are hidden within) who facilitate migration; no monitoring of such agents by any State agency;
- » Failures of the State machinery: law enforcement and justice being selectively prejudiced against the poor; corruption and lack of accountability of the system; red tape in judicial system; failure of social welfare policies and tools in reaching the poor and neglect towards situations of adolescent girls, in poverty, in particular

### 3. The Pull Factors

- » Dreams of escape: perceived opportunities and freedom in urban India – creating aspirations in adolescents, which is made use of by traffickers in casting appropriate lures
- » Demand for young, trafficked girls in prostitution and demand for adolescent girls in certain informal labour sectors for economic and sexual exploitation

Each of these factors, as captured in this research, is described below:

#### 1. THE PUSH FACTORS

- » Economic poverty
  - i. Her starvation, the daily life dependent forever on insufficient funds, makes her vulnerable, because she has a natural quest for a better life. So does her family. The base data did not capture the BPL status of families, but as already mentioned in Chapter 3, field interactions revealed that only 13.8% of the families did not belong to the BPL (Below Poverty Line) category.
  - ii. The poverty indicators were easily identifiable. As far as rural West Bengal is concerned, being landless is an indicator, which was common to all the BPL families interacted with. The second indicator was the lack of assets of any value, other than the huts or shanties where they live, and in few cases – goats / ducks / poultry. The third indicator was the lack of any regularised source of income – each BPL family being dependent on daily wage-earning activities, whether at their place of residence or through migration elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

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**Daughters of women in prostitution have added vulnerabilities to being trafficked, even if she does not stay in 'red light areas.'**

- iii. As far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, with the exception of one family that did not belong to the BPL category – the issue of land was not applicable, since the scenario was urban. The poverty indicators were, therefore, different. Lack of any regular employment opportunities and dependence on daily wage earning in the unorganised sector was one indicator. Being orphaned early and left to fend on one's own was another. A third indicator was the need for mothers to be in prostitution to keep the family going – either because of death of / desertion by the husband or because of alcoholism and non-engagement in income earning of the male head of the family. This reinforces findings from other studies that daughters of women in prostitution have added vulnerabilities to being trafficked, even if she does not stay in 'red light areas'.
- iv. There were also specific references to days spent without any food during interviews in both states, implying the inefficacy of food security guarantee schemes or programmes.
- v. Even the need to collect her own dowry may guide her to find an employment away from home. And, she does not have much choice because she does not have either much formal education or any employment-related skills – which was specifically the case with a girl trafficked at 11 and yet to be restored. This implies and/or strengthens a couple of findings: (a) the current anti-dowry laws are not enough to actually check the social custom, and (b) adolescent girls and young women have fewer income opportunities in rural areas than their male counterparts.
- vi. A total of 44.92% of the cases interacted with had been trafficked with the lure of better income. Of them, 64.5% had opted to migrate on their own and 35.48% had been

<sup>1</sup>Types of income-earning activities available to landless rural families have been provided in detail in Chapter 3.

sent by their families, an important indicator of the agency exercised by young girls in deciding on migration.

» **Lack of formal education / job skills training opportunities**

- i. Her being a school dropout or never being a part of the formal education does not only take away from her the scope of ever qualifying for anything better than what the other women in her village/slum do – it also adds to the drudgery of her existence. Among the 69 cases interacted with, 23.19% had never been part of any formal education system, while 76.81% had been enrolled in schools. An overwhelming 88.68% of those enrolled had already dropped out when trafficked/ exposed to the risk of being trafficked. Only 11.32% were still studying. Among those who had dropped out, 29.79% had dropped out before completing primary level while 40.43% had dropped out after completing the primary level (Class V). Only 19.15% had dropped out after reaching the secondary level. Among all the field interaction cases, only 8.70% have gone back to formal education after being restored – all of them at the secondary level. A total of 2.90% only have managed to complete secondary level. This indicates: (a) families or girls may not prioritise education, and/or may not have the means to continue with education due to poverty; (b) quality of education in schools that are accessible to the rural or urban poor is questionable and the girls or their families do not see much sense in continuing with education; (c) lack of support programmes, including vocational education or training, for girls who drop out of formal education.
- ii. Of those who had migrated for income earning, whether by their own choice or as per her family's decision

## A total of 26.09% cases among those interacted with were either the oldest or the youngest among many daughters.

– 25.8% had gone for domestic labour; 20.9% had been promised jobs in small-scale industries like a bottling factory, bag manufacturing, thread manufacturing etc and another 20.9% had gone to join dance troupes. It is important to note that the lure of better income is never that of a regular job in an organised sector – which remains beyond the reach of adolescent girls from poor families of rural Bengal and urban Andhra Pradesh because of their lack of access to job-related skills trainings.

» **The social oppression of girls: discrimination leading to abuse and exploitation**

- i. Out of school and without any scope for any job-related skills training, these adolescent girls were pushed into domestic work or income earning through locally available daily wage earning activities. They experienced all women in their context as living the same life – a life of poverty, of hardship with little income, subjected to domestic violence, behaviours and mobility restricted by social mores and taboos. Their needs of being loved and appreciated were unmet, their aspirations to explore and look for options unappreciated and discouraged (with the intent of 'protecting her'); their sexuality and experiences (often abusive) treated with suspicion and neglect – with no information but only with repression; the only option for a better life or an escape from the context offered to them was through marriage. Their quest was for wellbeing – of her body, her mind, her heart and her spirits but her everyday world offered no signal for

any of these being available. Hence the search for a different scenario. The curious, the spirited were as vulnerable as the gullible, the credulous. The case studies cited in earlier chapters may be remembered in this context. Reference may also be made specifically to a girl in West Bengal – not from a BPL family and studying in class VII – who had run away for work after her 16-year old sister, the one immediately above her, was married off. This 14-year old only wanted to carve a different future for herself.

- ii. The only difference between the unaware, the gullible and the curious, the spirited victims was that – the first steps into the trap with the consent of her family, while the second falls into the trap by herself, without informing her family or despite warnings by her family. Details of the proportion of girls who had chosen to migrate on their own for love/marriage is provided in the immediate next point. Details of the ratio of those who opted to migrate on their own for work and those sent by their families are provided later in this section.
- iii. Being the eldest among many siblings makes her want to contribute to the family's earnings so that everybody can live a little better. Being the youngest makes her feel desperate as the family's impoverishment only worsens with every hefty dowry paid for the wedding of her elder sisters. A total of 26.09% cases among those interacted with were either the oldest or the youngest among many daughters – not counting those where the number of daughters was two or one. This implies that 15.94% among those interacted with were

eldest among the daughters and 10.14% were youngest. It needs to be remembered in this context that the percentages are calculated against the total number of 69 cases directly interacted with, but this phenomenon was actually far more common to West Bengal. In Andhra Pradesh, cases of more than two sisters was virtually non-existent as the victims were either orphans, or their mothers were deserted/widowed while they were very young – making the victim the only child / only daughter. The implication is that the percentages would be higher if counted only against cases of many sisters.

- iv. The deep-seated social belief that marriage is the ultimate method to girls'/women's happiness contributed to the vulnerabilities for all the girls interviewed. It was this belief that, internalised by them, probably discouraged them from education or from being motivated to work towards social and economic roles of self dependence, creating a waiting in them for 'the knight in

### Marriage had acted as the entrapment factor in 21.74% cases among those interacted with.

shining armour' who would rescue them from their life of drudgery, like how Prince Charming rescued Cinderella from the evil step mother and sisters. In the context of the subject of this research, evilness is her context and the prince comes in a garb of a groom, a matchmaker, a relative who promises her a job and life in a city which would mean freedom. Even the job is a motivation to save for her dowry. This is the social belief that degrades a poor family to the level of destitution through mortgaging whatever little

they have to pay dowries for their daughters – so that the youngest cannot bear that plight any longer and runs away in search of work or a 'love marriage', only to get trafficked. Marriage had acted as the entrapment factor in 21.74% cases among those interacted with. Among them, elopement with lover for marriage had occurred in 86.67% cases while families had arranged dowry-less marriages in 13.33% cases only.

- » **Family dysfunctionality**
  - i. Family dysfunctionality considerably augments her risk factors – lack of parental care, chances of being married very young getting further enhanced, the added burden of taking up the onus of income earning, suddenly becoming homeless and unwanted because both her parents remarry and no one wants her and so on. A total of 76.81% of the cases interacted with had faced some kind of family dysfunctionality. Among them, 13.21% were orphaned; 7.55% had faced desertion by the father, with another 7.55% facing separation of parents. Fathers were dead for 13.21% of cases and fathers were unable to earn in 20.75% cases – either due to alcoholism or due to old age and illness. Child marriage and subsequent desertion by the survivor/ victim's own husband had happened in 9.43% cases.
  - ii. The risk factor inbuilt in women-headed households is the lack of faith of the head in herself. Irrespective of what she does, how much she has managed to achieve all on her own – she is paralysed by the feeling that she is a lone woman with no man to take care of her. This makes her ready to listen to anyone giving her any advice and the trafficker often enters precisely through that door – with the proposal of a good employment opportunity for her ward, or a marriage to a 'good

young groom with bright prospects, wanting no dowry'. A total of 21.74% of those interacted with belonged to woman-headed households.

## 2. THE FACILITATING FACTORS

### » Exposure to migration

- i. Exposure to migration and mobility for income earning added to the vulnerability of these adolescent girls, because they then readily agreed to opportunities to go out to work and earn, having seen examples and benefits of migration on migrants and families in her own context. A total of 47.83% of those interacted with had been exposed to migration – half of them had migrant family members and others knew migrants, even peers, in the community/locality. This information and knowledge (of others like her who have migrated and seem to have benefited) builds motivation, confidence and aspiration to migrate – however, it remains a question whether those migrants would share experiences of abuse and exploitation with their families once they returned (out of shame).
- ii. A total of 44.92% of the cases interacted with had been trafficked with the lure of better income-earning opportunities. Among them, as high as 64.5% had opted to migrate on their own while 35.48% had been sent by their families. The types of employment promised are to be noted, each related to unskilled or semi-skilled labour in the unorganised sector.
- iii. What is remarkable is that 48.38% did not know the specific nature of the job/employment they were being taken for – the lure was just 'some job or the other' – mostly in Mumbai. Both she and her family are completely unaware of the risks involved in migrating without more specific information on the nature of the job; the exact location and

address of the employment; the kind of income she could be earning; who could she access in case of any problem/crisis and so on. Migration for better income earning happens through social networking for the poor and therefore trust on the person recruiting is a crucial factor in the process, and the prior knowledge that many others from the village/locality have already migrated to the destinations mentioned for income earning. Later, we see how first procurers amongst traffickers are therefore people who are well known, trusted and 'one of them, one amongst them'. It implies the degree to which the poor and the resourceless have no assistance in protecting themselves from abuse and exploitation in migration.

- iv. Social vulnerabilities in interstate migrant labour by way of being in an alien culture, with different languages, even within India, seem to add to their vulnerabilities. The parents of any girl trafficked there become far more helpless than when they are in their own locale. A family, for example, had migrated to Moradabad in UP for employment, where their eldest girl was trafficked. The father did not only name the accused, but had quite a bit of incriminating evidence against the trio. But, he failed to lodge even a General Diary with the police there since the Moradabad police would only accept the complaint in Hindi and the father did not know any Hindi-literate person well enough to secure that help. Lack of social support for migrant labour renders them in-defensive to abuse and exploitation, in this case, trafficking as well.
- v. Some families were just residents in this country with no papers to prove their citizenship - settlers without any proof of residence or citizenship in India. Everyone in the family lives under the permanent discomfiture

of their status (or the lack of it). The trafficker probably knew well that her family would not be able to do anything about it.

One can refer to a family residing in a shanty off the Bongaon railway tracks to illustrate the point. The diction of the Bengali they spoke suggested they were from Bangladesh and none of the families living in those 20 odd shanties have any papers to claim any citizenship rights in India, though they have lived here for more than a decade. Afraid of being booked for illegal infiltration, this family did not even dare go to the police station to lodge a complaint, despite knowing who had trafficked their eldest girl.

» **The relationship with the trafficker**

- i. The research shows that traffickers were never unknown or strangers - they were always known and trusted, either through pre-existing relationship (a neighbour, a relative, a friend's mother, a classmate, the husband) or through deliberately fostered closeness (a lady she met during her daily travels to her place of work; a young man who had courted her as she commuted to and from her place of residence to her work place). It is redundant to talk about how the vulnerability factor increases if a core relative (father/mother/ stepfather/ husband/mother-in-law) is involved. In 10.14% cases, the trafficker was a core relative. (It needs to be noted in this context that the husband being labelled the trafficker is different from marriage or the promise of it being the entrapment for trafficking to happen.) In 7.25% cases, the trafficker was part of the extended family (brother-in-law/cousin/ uncle). In 40.58% cases, the trafficker was a member of the same community or a neighbourhood

person. In 39.13% cases, the trafficker was an outsider who had befriended/courted the victim only - with no interactions with the family or the community/ neighbourhood.

- ii. However, it is notable that the rural - urban divide between West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh brings in interesting changes in the proportion of traffickers being rank outsiders. In Andhra, where all cases of trafficking had happened in urban situations, a total of 69.23% of the traffickers were outsiders. In rural West Bengal, the percentage of outsiders as traffickers was 32.14%. Of the outsiders, 55.56% were males and 44.44% were females. Among the males, as high as 87% had courted the girls, leading to love affairs and elopement. All cases of females befriending the girls had been on the basis of offer of better income earning opportunities. In West Bengal, all of the female cases had been recruiters - respondents did not have any information of their being women in prostitution. In Andhra Pradesh, however, 3 of the outsider women involved were women in prostitution while the remaining 2 were recruiters who had sold the victims off.
- iii. The familiarity of the trafficker with the victim's context implies that s/he has a thorough understanding of the victim's psyche and sometimes, that of the family as well - which makes it possible for her/him to cast the appropriate bait. When the trafficker is an outsider s/he first establishes a rapport through friendship or courting. This is one indicator. A second is the type of lures offered. For a girl already engaged in income earning through employment in a small-scale manufacturing unit, the lure is that of employment in a bigger unit. For one engaged in daily labour, the lure is of more secure employment through domestic labour in a big city or in a small-



scale industry. For orphaned girls and/or girls facing familial neglect due to some kind of dysfunctionality – the lure is of love. For the daughter of a begging mother, the lure is of marriage to a family with landed property and other valuable assets. Such specificities also indicate the traffickers' understanding of the victim's psyche.

» **The efficacy of the State machinery in victim protection, reparation and justice:**

- i. The context reveals that the 'bottom of the pyramid' segment of people is either unaware of their civic rights or helpless in claiming their rights from State agencies. On the other hand, the system's response to victims of families and victims themselves shows its own apathy towards the rights of this segment. This reinforces a common poor wo/man's experience – that the system is by the middle and upper classes, of and for people with education, power and resources. The researchers found repeated situations such as – 'a mother who does not know that she does not need to pay money to the police in order for the accused to be arrested, a father who does not know that the police is only fooling him if they are taking him to different destinations without coordination with the local police there, so that the contact mobile number stops functioning every time after reaching the destination'.
- ii. The absence of any understanding of human rights, law of the land by State agencies or even people's representatives causes further violation of rights of victims, leading to double victimisation. Panchayat members who think that marriage to the rapist is the best that can be arranged for a 13-year old. Or those who feel that reunifying a trafficked girl with her family is justice enough – legal action or

conviction of perpetrators are less important or too much hassle or impossible to achieve and therefore best not tried. Even social workers fail to understand the significance of a restored girl going missing from police custody. Further, all these exchanges happened in the presence of other community members – depicting that the incomprehension of the violations in these situations was far more general than the number 69 of interacted cases suggest.

- iii. The commitment and/or efficiency of the State to the trial and conviction of traffickers were also experienced as questionable. As depicted in Chapter 3 – cases were lodged in 60.9% of the incidents of trafficking/abduction; but 63.8% of those booked are out on bail. Only two of the accused have been convicted and punished for minor abduction – both in Andhra Pradesh. In West Bengal, only 4% of those booked are in jail with non-bailable offences slapped against them. Only in 33.33% cases, trial is ongoing, though none of the survivors/families involved was aware of the exact status of the case. For 20.3% cases, the families were not even aware if trial had started.
- iv. Most traffickers were found to have excellent nexus with the local police. As high as 74.07% of the traffickers have been found to have such rapport with local police personnel – as expressed through a range of incidents from refusal to register an FIR, to refusal to arrest even after an FIR being lodged, to taking handovers of the victim from the trafficker in plain dress at a spot that is beyond the jurisdiction of the local police station, to handing the victim back to the trafficker while she was in police custody. Details of the status of trials have been provided in the point above and more specific details have been

provided in the 'State and Non-State Actors', 'And Justice for All: The Legal Machinery' and 'Lost and Found or Lost Still: The Impact of Trafficking' sections of chapter 3.

- v. With the exception of two orphaned girls and a third one with no family to go back to currently lodged in State-run shelter homes, the role of State in victim assistance and reparation was conspicuous by its absence. In Andhra, there is a provision for restored trafficked victims receiving a compensation package of Rs 20,000/-. But, as already mentioned in Chapter 3, the cases interacted with in that state had not received any such package. In West Bengal, as also mentioned in Chapter 3, both restored victims and their families were found to be completely unaware of any role the State might play in terms of rehabilitation of the survivor.
- vi. All NGOs in both the states, however, reported that local police have been more open to lodging FIRs than before – indicating an important shift.

**THE PULL FACTORS**

- » The appropriate lures cast by trafficker/s – the dream of a better quality of life, economically and otherwise: If poverty – both economic and of the quality of life in general – is a push factor, it is only natural that the lures cast by traffickers for an improved quality of life would act as the pull factor. As described in detail in Chapters 2 and 3, entrapment factors have been found to range from promises of better income-earning opportunities to a happy conjugal life in a big city where both would have opportunities to earn well. Whether the trafficker is a 15-year old next door neighbour, or a co-passenger on a local train, or one's own aunt – s/he always arrives with 'evidence' of living a better life

- fancy dresses, junk jewellery, a motorcycle and so forth.
- » The pull of urban India as an escape from poverty, social restrictions and opportunities underlie the pull to all migrants, which also includes, as subset, adolescent girls, some of whom get trafficked. Each one of the girls who had left on their own, whether for learning income-earning skills, or work or love, had perceived an option to break the status quo that she experienced all the women around her to live in. A total of 64.5% had opted to migrate on their own for work and 86.67% had eloped with their so-called suitors. In this research, such girls have been referred to as the spirited, the curious and all such girls / women interacted with mentioned that the pull factor was a perceived break from the life that otherwise awaited her.

### THE TRAFFICKING ROUTE

Based on the details given in the second section of Chapter 2, the following may be pointed out:

1. Most destinations in Andhra Pradesh are within the state, while in West Bengal all destinations are outside
2. Mumbai has been identified as the most common destination for victims of West Bengal – in 30.36% of the cases interacted with. Pune constitutes the next most common – in 14.29% cases. The third most common destinations are Delhi, Bihar and Haryana – each constituting 5.36%. Trafficking to Bihar has happened either in the name of marriage or to dance troupes in the name of work.
3. New destinations that have been identified are Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Hardwar – each constituting 1.79%.
4. Different districts of Uttar Pradesh have been identified as destinations also – not only in the form of

'marriage without dowry', but also for engagement in dance troupes – in a total of 3.57% cases.

5. Transit points are often non-existent, but for the districts in south Bengal – Kolkata is the point where the victim is made to board a train, though any transfer of hands may or may not happen.
6. For the northern districts of West Bengal, Alipurduar and New Jalpaiguri were identified as that point for boarding a long-distance train.
7. The most common destinations become credible to victims and their families because both single boys and men and families actually migrate seasonally to these cities for work.

### INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The preventive and protective measures being implemented by the organisations have been discussed in the chapter immediately preceding this one. In this section, an attempt has been made to capture in a nutshell the strategies that have worked well and the gaps that remain. Strategies have been considered from two different perspectives: anti-trafficking and child protection.

1. As an anti-trafficking strategy, case management (in source areas) has been found to be the most effective protective approach in victim identification, speedier rescue – even while victims could be in transit

and simultaneous prosecution of traffickers at source and destination points (the first procurers to brothel keepers / madams). Most importantly, when case management is undertaken in source areas, the crime gets visibilised, arrest or prosecution of traffickers get known in the community, leading to consequent awareness generation in the community.

2. NGOs with a history of service provision to communities find it more difficult to adopt programmes that are activism oriented, where services that the programme might render are not concrete or tangible. Community – based organisations at the grassroots level have been found to be more committed to this task than larger organisations implementing many different programmes.
3. Where there are partnerships between organisations in rural areas (source areas) and NGOs that focus on identification and rescue at destination points, case management is further strengthened and effective. Even in cases where families had managed to rescue the victim at transit points, it was possible because of the family's social contacts at the destination point – further proving the efficacy of the need for such linkage. However, there is scope to develop such connections more thoroughly – especially at the new destinations identified in course of this research.
4. With reference to child protection,

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**As an anti-trafficking strategy, case management (in source areas) has been found to be the most effective protective approach in victim identification, speedier rescue – even while victims could be in transit and simultaneous prosecution of traffickers at source and destination points (the first procurers to brothel keepers / madams).**

With reference to child protection, primarily as a preventive measure aimed at reducing vulnerability, adolescent girls' collectives seems to be a good tool to create spaces for adolescent girls, restricted within domesticity, for empowerment, whatever be the services rendered (education, vocational training).

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primarily as a preventive measure aimed at reducing vulnerability, adolescent girls' collectives seems to be a good tool to create spaces for adolescent girls, restricted within domesticity, for empowerment, whatever be the services rendered (education, vocational training). This has been found to be the only one that addresses trafficking within the larger context of economic and psychosocial factors that facilitate this phenomenon to take place. However, what seems to be deciding factors of success of this strategy is the participation of girls and their families (not necessarily conflated) in deciding on strategies for ensuring developmental rights, the organisation's understanding and approach to programming (rights-based versus restricted to service provision only) and most importantly, quality of programming in reaching objectives (educational mainstreaming, vocational training leading to income generation).

5. Motivating community health

workers and/or *anganwadi* workers in identification of trafficked children in communities and reporting on them seems to have met with limited success. Registers maintained by Panchayats in addressing trafficking seemed to be a challenged strategy, especially since it seems to offer no benefits to protection from trafficking or assistance to migrants in being protected from abuse and exploitation.

6. A strategy of developing Community-based Vigilance Groups (CVGs) in slums of Andhra Pradesh where prostitution is practiced, has worked well in terms of ensuring 24X7 watchfulness to prevent the introduction of underage girls into prostitution – whether from the area or trafficked from elsewhere – and on other child protection issues like underage marriage. Such CVGs consist of volunteers from the community and were found to be fairly active and committed towards their task. However, the flipside of the involvement of such CVGs is that they operate from community values and beliefs, some of which sometimes lead to over-restriction of adolescent girls.



# 6

## **THE WAY AHEAD: RECOMMENDATIONS**

For the State

For Non-State Actors

Overall Recommendations for Child Protection

## CHAPTER 6 THE WAY AHEAD: RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on research findings, and the inferences drawn from them, the recommendations below have been logically deduced for State and non-State actors. These measures, if applied, would improve the overall efficacy and efficiency of anti-trafficking and child protection initiatives in the two states covered in this research. It is also possible that they would be beneficial for the entire country in reducing the vulnerability of adolescent girls in source areas to being trafficked; improve the rescue-reunification-rehabilitation process overall; and enhance child protection measures in general. Areas that have been thrown up through this research as needing further investigation have also been mentioned in this context.

### FOR THE STATE

1. Given the strong connection between economic poverty, migration/mobility for income earning and vulnerability to trafficking – poverty alleviation schemes like the NREGA and other schemes available for the urban poor need to be implemented with improved efficiency and commitment. For the quality of implementation to improve, it is important that the State allows external audit to build up accountability and transparency. Partnering with civil society organisations could be an effective step towards that. It seems worthwhile to mention in this context that public-private partnerships in many spheres are quite the flavour of the day these days – but the role of the private partner is always limited to only implementing. That makes the private partner always dependent, subservient even, to the State. What is being suggested here is that civil society organisations be a full-fledged partner, not just for implementation – but in monitoring and evaluating as well, so that greater transparency and accountability can be brought into the implementation of government schemes. One of the crucial indicators, on the basis of this research, could be the inclusion of the poorest of the poor, with special focus on woman-headed households, within the ambit of existing poverty alleviation schemes.
2. Given the lack of options available to adolescent girls from economically poor families – whether in rural or urban situations – who either never become part of the formal education system or drop out before stepping into secondary education, schemes like the Kishori Shakti Yojana also need similarly improved implementation. The newly-launched Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) needs to be explored in this context so that job skills training may be connected with placement and/or entrepreneurship development programmes. External audit for accountability and transparency building is equally important in this aspect and partnering with civil society organisations could be an effective strategy as well. It

## The Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) need to come out with specific schemes for victim assistance, complete with reparation packages for survivors of trafficking and other psychosocial support programmes.

is, however, important to remember in this context that one-off job-skills training is never going to be of real help, because more often than not the context to which adolescent girls in poor families belong to does not offer much scope for income generation – with or without skills. For job-skills training to be effective, the State needs to make a concerted effort to create linkages with employers in the organised sector – corporates and other for-profit private sector agencies to ensure placement/employment options that would eliminate the need for distress migration of adolescent girls.

3. The Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) need to come out with specific schemes for victim assistance, complete with reparation packages for survivors of trafficking and other psychosocial support programmes. It is equally important to remember from the preventive perspective that gender discrimination plays a significant role in the entire scenario that makes adolescent girls vulnerable to trafficking. These ministries need to invest in the capacity building of localised grassroots level NGOs and CBOs towards increased understanding of gender justice so that strategies for mitigation may be developed with inputs from ground level understanding of how gender discrimination manifests itself in the everyday life of adolescent girls in situations of rural or urban

poverty. A study entitled *Bond Free*, commissioned and published by Groupe Developpement with the support of the European Commission, may be referred to in this context. Through detailed and in-depth investigation into the lives of a number of boys restored from situations of bonded/exploitative labour – this study has clearly revealed that a financial compensation package in itself is not sufficient to bring changes in the lives of restored children.

4. Given the grim scenario captured in this research about arrest, trial, conviction and punishment of traffickers – it is important for the State to investigate the status of law enforcement at the local level – from registering an FIR to submitting the charge sheet, and the reasons behind judicial delay – with special focus on the role of Public Prosecutors. Since trafficking is a human rights violation, the National Human Rights Commission could consider commissioning a research specifically to investigate these two aspects. One specific area for immediate attention, however, is the need to allocate funds to law enforcement agencies for investigation into cases of trafficking as well as rescue and reunification of the victim.
5. Andhra Pradesh has set up a system of the Integrated Anti Human Trafficking UNIT (IAHTU) of the police, which works in collaboration with local grassroots level organisations as also larger NGOs.

Given that this system has led to a notable improvement in the entire law enforcement scenario vis-à-vis trafficking – i.e. from registering a case to arrest, investigation and producing the charge sheet on the one hand and raid, rescue and reunification on the other – a similar system needs to be put in place in West Bengal and those other states that have emerged as destination areas in this research. Allocation of greater human and financial resources is a definite need. Making local police stations accountable to the state level AIHTU could be an effective strategy for increasing commitment at the local level in source areas. Disbursement of the funds for investigation, rescue and reunification of trafficked victims to local law enforcement agencies may be entrusted to this nodal body. The AIHTU, in its turn, would be needed to foster collaboration among local law enforcement agencies and CBOs and NGOs in source areas. It is crucial to remember in this connection that big urban NGOs are not necessarily the best representatives in anti-trafficking committees set up by the State because they do not come with the detailed knowledge of the context that pushes girls into trafficking. It is essential to include localised grassroots level NGOs and CBOs so that strategies can be tailor-made for the context that allows trafficking to happen.

### FOR NON-STATE ACTORS

This research has reflected that there is much scope for improvement in the role of the State in rescue and reunification of the survivor of trafficking, as also in the prosecution of traffickers. In the current scenario, non-State actors in the form of civil society organisations make significant contributions to anti-trafficking efforts – both in terms of allocating financial and human resources, as also in actually carrying out

relevant tasks at the ground level. In this section, focus areas for intervention by civil society organisations – both donor/support agencies and implementing organisations – as inferable from this research, have been encapsulated.

### SUPPORT / DONOR / FUNDING ORGANISATIONS

- » The case management approach adopted by Groupe Developpement in its Sanjog project has been found to be an effective strategy for anti-trafficking interventions in source areas, due to the following reasons:
  - This approach allows anecdotal information – on children and adolescents being victims of trafficking disconnected from their families – to be transformed into hard evidence with specific data. It is the application of this approach that generated the data on which this research has been based.
  - In combination with narratives of restored victims, such evidence builds a base for systematically mapping specific geographical locations as vulnerable source areas for trafficking, especially for commercial sexual exploitation.
  - Together they provide the basis for designing intervention strategies which may be broad-based or tailor-made for specific locations, depending on the commonalities and differences between the factors of vulnerability in different locations.
- » The other strategy that has emerged as necessary is that of collectivisation and empowerment of adolescent girls in source areas. Given that the restrictions and the drudgery that characterise the average life of adolescent girls from poor families act as strong push factors for being trafficked – building adolescent

girls' groups emerges as an effective strategy for both prevention and protection. For prevention, because these groups can become their own space – giving them a break from the daily doldrums of their lives, along with passing on necessary information. Such information should not be restricted to trafficking related issues only, but include information about rights; and about issues of gender, sexuality and relationships that occupy centre stage in most adolescent minds. This would also help protection as the empowerment process is expected to enable girls to take informed positions against violations like underage marriage, eve teasing and other forms of sexual harassment etc. Preventive initiatives can be most effective only when they are situated within a larger context that allows an undesired action (in this case trafficking) to happen. Collectivising adolescent girls and initiating an empowerment process for them is one such strategy that takes into consideration the larger reality of those at risk of being trafficked. It is also important to remember that such collectivisation must include girls who have never been part of the formal education system, or those who have dropped out of school – since this research has indicated such girls to be most vulnerable.

- » Linking up collectivisation and empowerment programmes for adolescent girls with job-skills training initiatives is imperative, given the degree to which the need for better income-earning opportunities acts as a lure in cases of trafficking. There is need, however, to revisit the types of such training programmes being offered by NGOs, so as to facilitate a shift from generating low-skilled / semi-skilled labour for the unorganised sector to developing skilled labour

for the organised labour sector. Further, as in the case of the State – it is equally critical for support/donor agencies and big, urban NGO to build linkages with corporates and other employing agencies in the organised sector so that all investment into job skills training of marginalised girls does not end up in generating cheap semi-skilled labour for the unorganised sector.

- » CBOs (community-based organisations) and localised grassroots level NGOs have been found to be more efficient and effective in carrying out the case management approach – especially in terms of sourcing information about children gone missing/disconnected from their families. Investing in CBOs, therefore, has emerged to be one of the more effective strategies for anti-trafficking programmes in source areas. While such organisations may lack in theoretical understanding of certain important concepts, as also in administrative abilities that can make a smart job of standard project cycle management tasks – such lapses are outweighed by their intimate knowledge of the context, the efficacy of their social networks for information collection about trafficking cases and their zeal for making changes in their own localities and communities. International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and other funding organisations might revisit their own terms of partnership development and management in order to bring in localised grassroots level NGOs and CBOs into the fold of anti-trafficking programme implementation, especially prevention, victim protection and reintegration, and prosecution of traffickers who were first procurers.
- » Such grassroots level organisations, however, need support in capacity building in specific areas detailed



below. Along with financial investment, support/donor/funding agencies need to invest in addressing such capacity building needs also:

- For the efficiency and efficacy of the case management approach to be further enhanced – CBOs and localised grassroots level NGOs need to receive trainings on case management. That will allow replication of this strategy in other source areas for trafficking. Simultaneously, consistent pressure building on relevant State machineries on the basis of the data generated by this approach needs to be taken up for this initiative to achieve desired changes.
- For the strategy of adolescent girls' collectivisation and empowerment to be optimally effective, organisations must have a clear understanding of the adolescent psyche – which alone can generate a non-judgmental attitude and promote empathy, both of which are also important for successful rapport building with restored victims for effective rehabilitation. Availability of schemes is one aspect of such rehabilitation, but promotion of trauma management skills, along with skills for generating psychological wellbeing are equally important ingredients.
- Life skills education, with special focus on the adolescent psyche and issues of gender and sexuality seems to be a tool that would be effective for the above. This would allow organisational personnel to be more effective in facilitating the empowerment process of adolescent girls at the preventive end. It would also enhance their skills of better rapport building with restored victims to ensure effective protection measures

and a meaningful rehabilitation process.

- Organisational personnel need to have trainings on the basic legal provisions that are relevant for prevention of trafficking. This would enable them to ensure that FIRs are written with the right provisions, as also to challenge defaulting police personnel. This is also necessary for them to be able to share this information with families and adolescent girls.
- Building upon the understanding of rights-based programming is essential for anti-trafficking interventions at source areas to become effective and sustainable. Training on human rights, citizens' rights and child rights – along with the existing provisions for the realisation of such rights is essential for organisational personnel to be able to speak the rights language and pass on the same consciousness among the communities they work with and for. Without these processes being implemented, any degree of sustainability through the generation of resistance against corruption and demand for creation and/or implementation of relevant government schemes would remain impractical hopes.

#### **NGOS AND CBOS AT SOURCE AND DESTINATION AREAS**

- » Mobilisation of available resources is an important factor of sustainability and this aspect needs to be focused on in anti-trafficking interventions in source areas. Resources most readily available to the source organisations are restored girls and women. Using them as peer educators has the advantage of being demonstrative of what the consequences of certain steps could

be, whether taken in compliance with the family or by oneself. It is recognised in almost all aspects of life that demonstration can achieve what words cannot. In addition, they would be peers – thereby facilitating discussions that may not surface in an adult-adolescent situation. Such involvement of restored girls/women also has an important protective impact, in terms of being instrumental in promoting self belief and a sense of agency. Organisations also need to actively look for concerned individuals for promoting voluntary involvement in their initiatives. School teachers, in particular, have struck the research team as a definite group for focus in this regard – both because they command a considerable degree of respect among local residents and because they were experienced to have been interested in finding out what was happening and why. In addition, school teachers are also involved with adolescents.

- » The linkages between source, transit and destination organisations need to be much more strengthened, with a focus on regularising communication among them. Cases of immediate intervention by family/community members resulting in restoration prior to being trafficked indicate that such urgent communication between source and transit organisations in particular could prove to be preventive. Coordinated linkages between source and destination organisations would allow case management to be scaled up as an integrated approach, covering case sourcing to reunification and rehabilitation.
- » CBOs and localised grassroots level NGOs would benefit from being linked up with organisations implementing anti-trafficking interventions at the district headquarter and state levels. This would facilitate follow-

up of cases at the law enforcement and judicial levels.

- » Advocacy and relationship building at the district level needs to be supplemented by policy level advocacy in order for relevant systemic changes being brought in. Such advocacy would necessarily have to be taken up by organisations located in State capitals, but it needs to be guaranteed that such organisations have direct linkages with grassroots level, localised organisations – so that the advocacy focus is not different from the concerns at the source areas.

## **OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

Macro level interventions for child protection which would feed into prevention of trafficking in source areas, whether they are carried out by the State, or non-State actors of different levels, have been outlined below:

- » Studies on mapping the vulnerability of children in BPL families need to be commissioned. It is only on the basis of such studies that specific strategies for protection of such children may be designed.
- » Since the national legal provisions permit engagement in non-hazardous income earning beyond the age of 14, migrant assistance programmes need to be envisioned – given that the current scenario in the country does not guarantee locally available employment opportunities for many. Such programmes should focus on prevention of migration for work below the age of 14 and safety assistance to those in the age-group of 14 – 18. Assistance to migrant families in case of any crisis like a child being trafficked may also be considered.
- » Social communication programmes need to be taken up for making migration safe with different stakeholders involved at the State and non-State levels.

# **ANNEXURES**

**Annex 1**  
Individual Narratives of the Researchers

**Annex 2**  
Guidelines for Field Interactions

**Annex 3**  
Field Diary

**Annex 4**  
Select Bibliography

# ANNEXURES

## ANNEX 1

### INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES OF THE RESEARCHERS

#### SO MUCH FOR A SEASONED NUT!

As a development activist, the issue of trafficking in children was certainly not uncharted territory for me – whether such trafficking is for forced or bonded labour, or for prostitution/ commercial sexual exploitation / sex work. 'Fallen women' in their mid-30s and 40s from a red light area in the city of Kolkata where I live and work, women who have now become friends enough to drop the ubiquitous suffix of 'didi' (elder sister) and address me just by my name, had introduced me to the incredulity of a phenomenon called trafficking for prostitution nearly a decade ago. As I returned home every Saturday all those years ago, after spending a couple of hours listening to the experiences of these women – tales of deceit, coercion, heartbreak and the ultimate acceptance of the 'whore' identity for themselves – of being tricked by a father / a boyfriend / an aunt / an uncle / an elder sister / the next door neighbour – I spent insomniac nights with my world breaking under my feet. That is when I'd found it difficult to believe that such near and dear ones could actually be so cruel to a teenage girl, or one even younger. That is when it had seemed to be a crime so monstrous that it beggars description. I've travelled many miles since then – working directly with women in prostitution, an overwhelming majority of them introduced to the trade through trafficking; their daughters – forever at risk of facing the same fate; and their sons growing up with the knowledge that teenage girls in their area of residence, maybe one's own sister even, represent a direct line to some easy cash. With children restored from trafficking. I was strongly under the impression that my being has been seasoned enough not to buckle under anything related to trafficking again. I was proved thoroughly wrong, however – in course of this research.

In his book aptly entitled *A Crime So Monstrous*, Skinner cites Stalin as supposedly maintaining: 'The death of one man is a tragedy. The death of a million men is a statistic.'<sup>1</sup> That was pretty much the case as I prepared the groundwork for this research. The 1400+ cases of children missing from their homes in different districts of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, which formulate the base document for this research, were not so disturbing. Numbers signified not much more than statistics as I busied myself with determining the sample size, identifying the samples, preparing the charts and graphs et al. The field level encounters, though, brought to fore the real significance of those 1400 odd cases. Stalin, if he really did believe what Skinner says, was wrong.

<sup>1</sup>Skinner, Benjamin E, *A Crime So Monstrous: A shocking exposé of modern-day sex slavery, human trafficking and urban child markets*, 2008, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh and London, p 18

Every single one of those cases visited in course of this research – 69 in all – made me understand the real meaning of those numbers. The magnitude of the crime and its dimensions; the smoothness with which trafficking can be executed and the utter failure, or disinterest maybe, of the State in curbing it; the endless repetition of the 'back to square one' syndrome for girl after girl, family after family – all of these made my guts churn after many years.

I died a thousand deaths as I undertook the hectic field trips in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. As a 15-year old emaciated girl sat with her 5 month old malnourished child in a roadside shanty that is her mother's home, recounting how she had eloped with a man double her age to taste a life different from the one of hunger and deprivation that she has known since birth – I kept thinking about my own 15-year old, a budding beauty in her Levi's jeans and fashionable tee's carrying Smart Alec motifs like 'I make my own rules' or 'Don't give me an attitude. Have enough of it myself'. My insides shrank with horrible feelings of guilt. The mother in me died as I listened to a 16-year old who had run away to escape being married to a man who is her mother's paramour – a ploy to get the wagging tongues in the village to stop. Or to a 19 year old whose mother had sold her off to a brothel owner when she had not even reached puberty. The woman in me vanished in shame as I sat listening to another who had just crossed 18 three days ago, recount her life story in an utterly emotionless voice – experiences of rape, of prostitution, of deceit in the name of marriage, of abortions and child death, of domestic violence, and of the need to prostitute herself to satiate her hunger. My uterus was ready to jump out of my utterly nauseous body as another 19-year old mentioned how she had to continue taking clients till the 8<sup>th</sup> month of her first pregnancy when she was all of 15. But why would men

want to have sex with her under such conditions? Her response crumbled all men I've ever known into one vast mass of a faceless monster with just a huge penis – 'Because they enjoyed f\*\*\*ing the mother of someone else's child.'

The adult in me would not have survived her sanity to write this narrative, forget about the report, had there not been light at the end of the tunnel somewhere. That, too, was provided by the girls and women and families interacted with. A father, who is crippled from an accident and heads a family of semi-starvation, has courage enough to refuse an offer of a huge sum of money from the brothel owner who had bought his daughter. A bribe to withdraw the case against the trafficker at the village end. 'Starvation is not new to me, but justice will be – if I can have that man convicted. I'll die a happy man knowing that I could not protect my own daughter, but I've done something to protect many others' – words that renewed my faith in humanity. A 24-year old who had already faced enough before she was trafficked at 20 – only to counter-trick the trafficker into bringing her back, having him arrested, and then give such a succinct description of her journey to Delhi Childline that they identified the house and rescued 7 other girls imprisoned there. She remains a candle burning bright in my memory – a pointer that all is not lost yet.

This report is an attempt to capture all of that – the numbers, the individuals, the families; the corruption, the helplessness, the drudgery . . . The quantitative aspect is limited by the numbers available in the base document – the case management information received from NGOs and community based organisations who were participants in this research. One might certainly argue that the numbers are not enough to draw any justifiable inferences on their basis. Fair enough. It is difficult to make any numbers count in a country as vast as India, with a

population of over a billion. But, these are real numbers – referring to children who are actually away from their homes. What this report seeks to offer with those numbers is an insight into trafficking – how it happens, to whom does it happen, who and what makes it happen, what does it lead to . . . The research team may not have been able to capture how massive the problem is in terms of numbers, but the team certainly hopes to have captured the magnitude of the phenomenon itself.

- *Paramita Banerjee*

## **MY TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCE**

No. I was not trafficked; neither was I a trafficker, just an interested individual inquiring about a land uncharted for me. I would have been happier to be a tourist, as rural Bengal is indeed beautiful, even in the scorching month of April. Alas, I was not a tourist – rather, a member of a research team trying to make sense out of an unbelievable hideousness called trafficking.

As a mental health worker and a sexuality rights activist, my erstwhile tryst with trafficking had been references of women and girls in prostitution who had been trafficked, or of experiences of trauma faced by trafficked girls and women – one of the many development issues discussed among friends and comrades. When I got this chance offered by Sanjog and Paramita, I was excited as it promised travel and meeting people; interaction with them and their stories. Stories of people have always intrigued me, and Paramita insists that I have my way of entering into people's minds to facilitate the articulation of their stories.

**I HAD NO IDEA THAT TRAFFICKING COULD BE SUCH A MONSTROSITY!!!**

We had visited 8 districts of West Bengal, met 56 individuals and/or families and

learnt about this huge and incredible phenomenon that gathers human beings as commodities and sells them in the local/regional/national market. I guess their business prospect is looking up day by day, their market expanding and their modus operandi getting honed and perfected. Even when I am sitting in my room typing these words in front of my computer, I would not be surprised to turn back and see some agent standing behind me reading these lines. Yes, they are studying their market, using all the possible tools known to us, and planning the next move.

I may sound a bit paranoid, but if you are trying to paint the picture of a trafficking victim by learning about her daily life, her family chores, her friends and lovers (?), her dreams, aspirations, dreamlessness, her vulnerabilities – and suddenly realise that this is the way, the exact route through which the trafficker also must have walked or is actually walking with an invisible cloak on by your side – you got to have goose bumps. Well, I do!

So, the trafficking victim is usually the poor teenage girl, with very little or no knowledge about the outer world, just with an ever hungry stomach and an ever miserable heart. Or the head strong ever rebel with an inquisitive mind and lust for life, who does not fit into her Cinderella (!!) shoes. Sometimes, may be a cross between these two extremes – but all differences merge into the same story of deceit, cruelty, abuse, exploitation and dehumanisation. And her coming back, especially those who had run behind the shadow for a better life, a more meaningful life – it was pathetic to see that heart break, and desolation, and loss.

Still, we kind of know who the trafficked could be. What I have not understood at all is – who the trafficker could be. Anyone, just about anyone with a keen business sense. You need not even invest

money in this flourishing business; all you need to do is good home work. You have to know which of the girls are feeling unloved, how many of the families are desperate enough to marry their girls off to anyone as long as it is without dowry or which girl is dreaming the impossible dream of changing the status quo of her life. And you place a suitable bait in front of them. Only, you have to know her or her family, a complete stranger won't fit the bill of a trafficker. The only monetary investment is transportation cost, and each consignment may fetch anything between five hundred and five thousand rupees. And, you will never get caught. Never, I promise, because the police is by your side, families are poor and illiterate, none of them with any idea about anything called rights – human rights, child rights or legal rights.

Poverty and marriage seem to fight for centre stage. Poverty, that is all pervasive and somewhat beyond the understanding of our middle class experiences. A gap through which a regular rural family accepts and internalises prostitution, sometime within a superficial garb called marriage. Their daughter is married to her pimp, her customer, her owner! He is easily transformed into the Prince Charming variety of a son-in-law who had 'rescued' their girl and is now looking after the entire family. 'Marriage' becomes the key word to a respectable livelihood. Marriage is also sometimes the only existing career option for the family, as also for the teenage girl whose body and mind are constantly fighting for a space of recognition from the oblivious world around. And sex – the taboo word for the community, family, individual and also for the organisation – has no recognition in her asexually reproductive universe. (One of the organisations didn't know the correct spelling of sex, perhaps. So they wrote 'teenage intrinsic seduction' with reference to a sexual situation.) Hardly surprising, then, that she would grab the first opportunity of a promise of marriage and embark upon

the journey beyond the rainbow to Never Never Land!

What should we do in front of this incredulity? Organise rehabilitation for the restored girls/women? Push for arrest and punishment of the trafficker? Or of the police personnel who are hands in glove with the criminals? Awareness campaigns? Peer educators? Teenage girls' groups? I can't ask them not to dream, not to go out of their homes, not to trust people, not to believe in themselves! Strangely, the trafficker and the patriarch father-figure seem to point their fingers at the same direction: Danger lurks in the dark corner outside home, outside her confinement, so better be inside!

A drenched woman in a tattered sari, stinking of sore fish and slime, the bread winner for her natal family, the eldest sister of the trafficked girl who was trafficked by the husband of their middle sister, said with absolute resolution – 'We don't want her back. What would we do with her? Deep-fry her and eat?' (A Bengal delicacy, deep-fried munchies!) A pretty, frail young girl, barely into her teens, her brownish hair tied in two pony tails, now lives in a 'home' after police rescued her from Delhi. She was talking about two young men who took her to show the big city and then dumped her in front of a temple. She does not remember what happened before that dumping took place. Only, when my playful fingers touched her lowering chin, she almost screamed and looked at me with a frightened expression that will remain etched in my mind. I could have killed those men in Delhi!

There are heart warming tales, too, of courage, conviction, care and love side by side with the heart wrenching ones, and at the end of the day, I as a researcher and a woman and a mother of a young daughter couldn't but empathise with those. Yet, a feeling of all pervasive despondency was settling upon me throughout the field

interaction period. I was feeling guilty somewhere as if I haven't done my duty. Now, as the report is taking a definite shape, I am rather at peace with myself. I can now comprehend how, where and why this research is relevant and what have my inputs been. Yes, I have contributed towards the understanding of prevention of trafficking at source. I have contributed to make this world a slightly better place to live. Thanks to Sanjog and thank you Paramita!

- Sumita Basu Bandyopadhyay

### MY EXPERIENCE OF THE ANTI TRAFFICKING RESEARCH IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Working in this assignment was a very new experience for me and gave me an outsider's view of the initiative. In most of the cases, the trafficking occurred when a minor girl wanted to change/improve her/her family's socio-economic status by separating from the family and accepted help from individuals to work in unorganised jobs. The other main reason was found to be a history of prostitution in the family (family members being part of the trafficking process).

All the organisations we visited were facilitating Community Vigilance Groups and Motivation Centres for adolescents to make them aware of the danger of trafficking and changing their ways of life. That, to me, seemed very effective in restricting trafficking from the source. However, more emphasis on livelihoods promotion for both the adolescents from vulnerable group and the rescued victims would be more productive in restricting trafficking. The Motivation Centres can also keep the target group informed about different employment/livelihood schemes run by the government and other organisations and help/facilitate the individuals avail them.

I would like to thank GD South Asia for giving me the opportunity to work with

them in this assignment. It was a great experience working with Ms Paramita Banerjee, who continuously educated me and helped me to get an insight into trafficking, its major reasons and their preventive measures.

- Bijay Narasingh Deo

## ANNEX 2 GUIDELINES FOR FIELD INTERACTIONS

### ORGANISATIONS

- » Document check:
  1. Details of the case – socio-economic profile of the victim's family and demographic profile of the victim (if available)
  2. Details of the socio-economic profile of the trafficker (if available)
  3. Case follow-up mechanisms used – strategic and procedural
- » Developing detailed itinerary for visit to the sample cases
- » FGD with the director and frontline workers to gain an insight into the above details and the challenges faced in implementing an anti-trafficking programme

### VICTIM / FAMILY INTERVIEWS

1. Detailed demographic profile of the victim – age, religion, caste where applicable, position in the family, schooling, engagement with any other form of education/ skills-learning, income-earning, whether married and the status of the marriage
2. Socio-economic profile of the victim's family – size, details of family members, income-earning members, income and expense patterns
3. The details of the situation of trafficking – by whom, how, by what route, where, why

4. The details of the rescue/restoration/return process – by whom, at what gap, how, in what condition
5. Restoration and rehabilitation support – availability and quality – by organisations, by family and by community

### INTERVIEWS / INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

1. Organisational personnel
2. Neighbours and other community members

All of the above were combined with structured observations to capture how trafficking is perceived, with a focus on the following:

1. Comfort level of the victim in being interviewed
2. Attitude of the family towards trafficking and the restored victim
3. Attitude towards issues of trafficking – for other stakeholders

## ANNEX 3

**FIELD DIARY****UPDATE - WEST BENGAL - 17<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2010**

STATE	DISTRICT	BLOCKS / MUNICIPALITY	ORGANISATION	CASES - PROJECTED	CASES - ACTUAL	STATUS
West Bengal	North 24 Parganas 22 <sup>nd</sup> – 29 <sup>th</sup> March, 2010		BUP Consortium	23	26	Completed
		Sandeshkhali 1 Basirhat 1	SBMS	3	3	Completed
		Baduria	NSS	5	5	Completed
		Basirhat 2	TISM	3	5	Completed
		Swarupnagar	GSS	4	4	Completed
		Bongaon	CLHS	4	4	Completed
		Gaighata	BUP	4	5	Completed
	South 24 Parganas 31 <sup>st</sup> March – 3 <sup>rd</sup> April, 2010	Canning 1, Canning 2, Basanti	GGBK	7	7	Completed
		Namkhana Magrahat Pashchim Diamond Harbour	SRDTC (south)	3	3	Completed
	Uttar Dinajpur 5 <sup>th</sup> April, 2010	Raiganj Hemtabad	SJAA	2	2	Completed
	Coochbehar (also Jalpaiguri) 6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> April, 2010	Toofanganj 1 (Coochbehar district) Kumargram (Jalpaiguri district) Jalpaiguri municipality	SRDTC (North)	1	2	Completed
		Coochbehar 1 Coochbehar municipality	SPAR	3	3	Completed
	Murshidabad 9 <sup>th</sup> April, 2010	Domkal	SPMUS	2	3	Completed
	Nadia 10 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> April, 2010	Chapra Ranaghat 1 Chakdaha	CSEWA	5	6	Completed
Purba Medinipur 13 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> April, 2010	Deshapran Contai 1 Contai 2 Ramnagar 2	VLN	4	4	Completed	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>26 blocks – 2 municipalities</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>Completed</b>



## UPDATE - ANDHRA PRADESH - 23RD APRIL, 2010

STATE	DISTRICT	BLOCKS / MUNICIPALITY	ORGANISATION	CASES - PROJECTED	CASES - ACTUAL	STATUS
Andhra Pradesh	Vishakhapatnam 19th April, 2010	Vishakhapatnam Municipality	MA (Mahila Action)	2	2	Completed
	East Godavari 20th April, 2010	Rajahmundry Rural Mandala	JKWS (Jana Kalyan Welfare Society)	2	2	Completed
	West Godavari 21st April, 2010	Bhimavaram Municipality	AFD (Action for Development)	2	3	Completed
	Krishna 22nd April, 2010	Gudivada Mandala	SNEHA (Society for National-integration through Education and Humanizing Action)	2	2	Completed
	Prakasam 23rd April, 2010	Chirala, Machavaram, and Darshi Mandalas	HELP (Help Entire Lower-rural People)	2	4	Completed
	Guntur 23rd April, 2010	Karampudi Mandala				
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6 Mandalas + 2 Municipalities</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Completed</b>

## ANNEX 4

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**Groupe Developpement**, a French international NGO, promotes integrated, responsible and sustainable development to ensure people's right to life, not basic survival. It supports local associations in delivering innovative responses to the challenges of poverty and exclusion. Its specific areas of work include promoting livelihoods, social enterprises, ethical tourism development, economic programmes for agronomy and related livelihoods and protection of children's rights, especially to prevent sexual abuse, violence and exploitation of children. With a presence in 40 countries, Groupe Developpement also facilitates knowledge and skills sharing through North/South and South/South exchanges.

**Website:**

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**Sanjog**, a technical resource organisation, develops resource programmes for NGOs to build gender equity and social justice. It is committed to strengthening civil society initiatives that work on childhood and adolescence, to build their capacities in psychosocial programming. It promotes convergence of resources and building multistakeholder alliances for greater impact. Supported by Groupe Developpement, the organisation emerged as a response to sectoral needs and gaps in psychosocial programming to address abuse, violence and exploitation of children.

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