

# Snatched Childhood

A Study Report on the Situation of  
Child Prostitutes in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF)



terre des hommes  
netherlands



# **Snatched Childhood**

**A Study Report on the Situation of  
Child Prostitutes in Bangladesh**

**Sharfuddin Khan  
Md. Azad**

**February 2013**

## Snatched Childhood

### A Study Report on the Situation of Child Prostitutes in Bangladesh

Editorial Board	: Mr. Md. Emranul Huq Chowdhury, Chairperson, BSAF Mr. Abdus Shahid Mahmood, Coordinator, BSAF
Overall Coordination	: Mr. Abdus Shahid Mahmood, Coordinator, BSAF
Consultant	: Mr. Sharfuddin Khan Mr. Md. Azad
Financial Assistance	: <b>Terre des Hommes</b> - Netherlands House No. 670/A, Road No. 11 (new) Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka - 1209
Printed at	: <b>VERTEX</b> Printing & Advertising Room # 705, 6th Floor, Nahar Plaza Sonargaon Road, Dhaka - 1000
ISBN	: 978-984-33-7313-7
Price	: Taka 300.00 US\$ 10.00

February 2013

Publisher:

**Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF)**

House No. 42/43 (Level - 2), Road No. 2

Janata Cooperative Housing Society

Ring Road, Adabar, Dhaka - 1207. Bangladesh

Phone: 88-02-911 6453, Fax: 88-02-911 0017

E-mail: [info@bsafchild.net](mailto:info@bsafchild.net), [bsaf@bdcom.net](mailto:bsaf@bdcom.net)

Website: [http:// www.bsafchild.net](http://www.bsafchild.net)

## Table of Content

Acknowledgement	4
Message from the Chairperson	5
Acronyms	6
Glossary	6
Executive Summary	7
<b>Chapter 1: Background</b>	
Background of the Study	10
Objective of the Study	11
Scope of Work	11
<b>Chapter 2: Methodology</b>	
Gathering and Reviewing Relevant Documents	12
Consultations with Key Stakeholders	12
Focus Group Discussions	12
Visiting Brothels & Shelter Homes	12
Limitations	13
<b>Chapter 3: Findings of the Study</b>	
Magnitude of the Problem	14
Process of Trapping into Prostitution	14
Locations	15
Living Conditions	15
Food, Health and Education	15
Relations/ Involvement	16
Control over Financial and other Resources	16
Causes of Child Prostitution	18
Implications of Child Prostitution in Children's Life	19
Child Prostitution from Social and Economic Point of View	19
Livelihoods of the Child Prostitution and their Families	20
Case Studies	21
<b>Chapter 4: Intervention of National and International Organizations</b>	
Intervention by GoB	24
Intervention of National and International Organizations	25
<b>Chapter 5: International Instruments, National Policies and Laws</b>	31
References	40

## **Acknowledgement**

This study on "Child Prostitution in Bangladesh: A Situation Analysis" was conducted by a team of Development Communication Network ( DCN), commissioned by Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) and supported by Terre Des Hommes Netherlands. Acknowledgements are due to numerous individuals and organizations for their support and cooperation at various levels of the study.

Our appreciation goes to the different ministries and departments of the Government of Bangladesh and non-governments national, international and UN organizations namely Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers Association (BNWLA), INCIDIN Bangladesh, Nari Unnayan Shakti (NUS), PIACT Bangladesh, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Save the Children, Social and Economic Enhancement Programme (SEEP), Society for Social Services (SSS), Terre Des Homes Netherlands, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) who helped with information for the benefit of this study.

We are grateful to the children forced into prostitution, parents, duty bearers who shared their time, problems, stories, views and suggestions to prepare and enrich the study report.

Sharfuddin Khan

Md. Azad

### **Message from the Chairperson**

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) has been engaged in promoting and protecting the rights of the children since its inception in 1991. Almost half of the population of Bangladesh being below the age of 18 years. BSAF provides top focus to establishing the rights of the children. Child protection, combating child trafficking, elimination of child labor, impede child abuse and increase children's participation in development process are the major areas of advocacy of BSAF. BSAF has been very much involved and plays active role in formulation and implementation of national policies, acts and systems with regard to children. A series of effective programs are being implemented by BSAF on regular basis for improving the situation of children in Bangladesh.

I am happy to know that Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) has conducted a study on the situation of the children in sex work in Bangladesh and a report is being published. The report contains the misery of the children forced to prostitution, causes & consequences, their social and economic perspectives etc.

The main objective of the study was to visualize the situation of children in prostitution in Bangladesh in terms of estimated numbers, magnitude of the problem, major causes and consequences, impact on the lives of children and probable recommendation to overcome the problems. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics-BBS, there are about 15,702 girl sex workers in Bangladesh. It is believed that number is under reported and actual number of children in sex work is much higher than the statistics given. The study was itself a completed because of its invisibility of the issue and as over all society does not take the issue in a proper way. The situation of the children in sex work is serious and the number is increasing because of various socio-economic reasons. This study will give insight about the conditions of the children in sex work. The study will encourage the concerned stakeholders to address the issue in their future action so that the children who are suffering can be protected.

The study has been made possible with the contributions and actions of Executive Board Members, Editorial Board, Officers in the BSAF Secretariat and Member Organizations of BSAF. We are thankful to all other individuals and organizations that have supported the study. We are also thankful to the consultant who proved competent enough for the study. We are very much indebted to Terre des Hommes-Netherlands for their continued financial support to BSAF and the study in particular.

Md. Emranul Huq Chowdhury  
Chairperson, BSAF  
Dhaka: February 18, 2013

## Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BSAF	Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations Against Women
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CWC	Child Welfare Council
DSS	Department of Social Services
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
ILO	International Labor Organization
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NGO	Non Government Organization
NCLEP	National Child Labor Elimination Policy
NPA	National Plan of Action for Children
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TdH-NL	Terre des Hommes - Netherlands
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNIFEM	United Nation Development Fund for Women
UNDP	United Nation Development Program

## Glossary

**Babu** – One male sex partner who believed to be lover of one prostitute

**Majar** – Grave of religious leaders

**Masi** – Women who owns bonded sex workers in brothel

**Mastan** – Miscreants, troublemaker

**Nosta** – Spoiled

**Nosta Meye** – Spoiled girl due to rape, prostitution or illegitimate sex

**Salish** – Alternative Dispute Resolution or resolution at the community Level

**Sukrees** – Newcomers young prostitutes



## Executive Summary

Bangladesh has ratified number of international instruments and formulated policy against sexual abuse and exploitation of children including trafficking. These measures certainly indicate the GOB's policy commitment and initiatives towards achieving the goals set for fulfilling the rights of children. However, there is a wide gap between policy commitment and implementation.

Though there are no reliable statistics on the extent of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), it is estimated that there are approximately 10,000 to 29,000 victims of CSEC in Bangladesh (GME 2007). The incidence of violence, including commercial sexual exploitation of children especially girls is believed to grow which is a significant problem. However, this problem remains largely hidden due to clandestine nature of this trade and reluctant attitude of concerned stakeholders towards the issue.

This study was undertaken in order to strengthen the knowledge base of BSAF an apex body of 263 organizations working on child rights issues and its member organizations. Main objective of the study was to visualize the situation of child prostitution in Bangladesh in terms of estimated numbers, magnitude of the problem, major causes and consequences, impact on the lives of children and probable suggestions to overcome the problem.

Information were collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected mainly through interviews and Focus Group Discussions. In addition, informal discussions were conducted with relevant stakeholders. Case studies were also collected from primary source. Primary data were collected mainly from Dhaka and two brothels in Doulatdia and Tangail. National and international instruments, study reports, annual reports etc. were the secondary sources of information.

Women and girls are widely treated as sexual objects in Bangladesh. Though it is widely circulated that women and girls enter into prostitution willingly, it was found that behind that willingness there were compulsions. Children are recruited and forced into prostitution by the vested interest groups who use various techniques through their agents like pimps, local mastans, brothel owner, members of the law enforcement agencies etc. for monetary or other types of benefit. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics-BBS, (*Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Pilot Survey 2008*), there are about 15,702 girls' sex workers in Bangladesh. Out of these, 430 are brothels, 2,498 hotels, 4,088 streets, and 8,686 are residence based prostitutes. It is believed that number is under reported and actual number of child prostitutes is much higher than the statistics.



Children forced into prostitution are deprived of basic necessities and rights like quality food, shelter, education, medical care. They do not enjoy any rest, recreation and leisure. They are also excluded and deprived of most of the public and social services.

Sardarni, pimps, dalal, mastans, room owners of brothels, are visible perpetrators of abuse and exploitation. However, there are invisible vested interests groups particularly people in powerful economic, social or political positions that are not directly involved but to some extent help this crime against humanity to continue.

When perpetrators should be arrested, police arrested 30 percent of the girls forced into prostitution, 13 percent of the eunuchs and 18 percent boys in last one year. To get release from the police custody, 46 percent of the arrested child prostitutes had to pay bribe, 19 percent suffered physical assault and 9 percent had to entertain them with sex.

Pretending to restore social norm and values, girls and their families are abused, tortured, marginalized and often ostracized by so called social and community leaders. To save the perpetrator as they are mostly from wealthy and powerful strata, girls are usually blamed as nosta or instigator of eve teasing and even rape. During the local salish, vested interest group often get together to drive away the family from the community to grab resources particularly land.

There are brothel, hotel, apartment and street based prostitution. Residential hotels adjacent to bus, train, and launch terminals believed to rent room to facilitate prostitution. Street based prostitution is widespread in parks, near bus and train stations, cinema hall, and also in places nearby majar (grave of religious leaders), government offices (as this are closed in the evening), buildings under construction etc. Apartment based prostitution is hard to locate as it spreads in major cities.

Though almost all children want to leave prostitution, get back in society and lead a life with dignity, opportunities are very low as they cannot go out as long as the so called debt of buying her by the masi/ sardarni is not paid back often till the end of their lifetime. Moreover, girls cannot go out of this profession as no one will accept them in the society.

Clients list is quite long according to the prostitutes, which include people from all strata such as government officials, police, journalist, lawyers, businessmen, NGO workers, drivers, mastans, political workers and leaders, students, drivers, laborer etc. It has been learnt that in recent years that number of younger clients like school, college and university going boys and men are increasing.

Major causes of prostitution are unemployment, vulnerability due to lack of education, lack of awareness, poverty perpetuated by economic disparities, injustice, social stigma, deprivation, marginalization, gender discrimination, harmful traditional practices, lack of proper implementation of legal instrument, grip of the powerful section of the society, domestic violence etc.

As a consequence a child who could have been a responsible and productive citizen of the country remain as sex slave and ends up only serving without positive value. Prostitution has severe negative economic and social impacts. Children forced into prostitution are condemned and seen as anti-social entities. Economic deprivation, social marginalization and stigmatization often lead these children to learn hatred. They feel like taking revenge that perpetuates violence in the society.

GoB, several national and international NGOs and development partners are providing various services such as temporary shelter, food, basic education vocational training etc. However, these services are inadequate comparing to the need and requirements.

Despite initiatives undertaken by government and non-government organizations, there are challenges in addressing the commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution in Bangladesh. Recently, government has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure birth registration, still a large proportion of children are not registered. Information and data on child prostitution is inadequate. It is hard to rehabilitate or reintegrate victims as families do not want to take them back due to possible social stigma.

It is extremely important to address economic, social, cultural, political factors that push children into and help perpetrators to continue prostitution. Interventions need to be designed in such a manner so that no children are forced into prostitution; existing prostitutes can be gradually withdrawn and be integrated in the society; and children of prostitutes do not get involved in the same profession by generation. Broadly it is recommended to organize national campaign for raising awareness of all concerned, ensure proper law enforcement, establish good governance, designing programmes to rescue, rehabilitate and integrate children. It is also believed that a responsive and sensitive media can help children not to be victimized of prostitution. Wider collaboration and cooperation among the government and non government organizations is also required to address the issue. More research and advocacy can help in understanding the problem and involve stakeholders to take necessary steps in protecting children from prostitution.

## **Chapter - 1: Background**

### **Background of the Study**

Like many other countries, women and girls are widely seen or treated as sexual objects in Bangladesh. They have subordinate status in family and society at large and discriminated at all spheres of life. They are suppressed to have control over their resources. A child is not born as prostitute but political, economic situation and social conditions compels them to serve as sex slaves or prostitutes. Women and girls are forced into prostitution and do not join prostitution by choice. It is easy for adults to take advantage of children's vulnerability and trap them into commercial sexual exploitation for monetary and other benefit.

Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within a very short period of its adoption by the UN General Assembly in November 20, 1989. After that the World Summit for Children held in September 1990 adopted a Declaration on the survival, protection, development and participation of the children, in general. More than 190 countries, including Bangladesh, have committed themselves towards fulfilling the rights of children.

Bangladesh, in accordance with the constitutional obligations as well as commitments made at the international level, has been working towards achieving the goals adopted by the World Summit on Children held in 1990.

Among others child prostitution is a serious problem in Bangladesh. Though there are no reliable statistics on the extent of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), it is estimated that there are approximately 10,000 to 29,000 victims of CSEC in Bangladesh. However, the illegal and invisible nature of the issue makes it extremely difficult to gather reliable data.

More than 20,000 children are born and live in the 14 registered red-light areas of Bangladesh. Boys tend to become pimps once they grow up and girls continue in their mothers' profession. Most of these girls enter the profession before the age of 12. Within brothels, girls who are bonded sex workers are the most deprived of their rights. Street-based child sex workers have greater independence but they are more vulnerable to physical and verbal abuse.

Children who are sexually exploited suffer serious physical and psychological harm. Many of them suffered from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and others had skin diseases, pain and infection of the sexual organs and symptoms of malnutrition and pregnancy. Psychologically, they reported strong feelings of anger, frustration, despair, and dejection. Girls reportedly suffered from low self-esteem with more frequency than boys. In addition, many children also reported suicidal tendencies, impulse to self injury/self-mutilation and a desire to destroy the property of others.

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), an apex body of 263 organizations working on child rights issues, has been working towards the establishment of a networking and advocacy mechanism for child rights. The major emphasis of its program is to minimize exploitation of children with a particular focus on girl children through awareness raising and social mobilization, capacity building of member NGOs, strengthening of BSAF's own resource base and strengthening of BSAF's institutional set up. BSAF plays an important role in the Government CRC monitoring committee reporting process to the UN, where it produces an alternative report and follows up on the concluding remarks of the UN CRC committee to the Government report. BSAF has been working with different Government Bodies of Policy formulation under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs for monitoring child rights situation in the country.

In order to strengthen the knowledge base of BSAF and its member organizations on the issue of child prostitutions through gathering updated information and other related issues for further strengthening BSAF's advocacy initiatives against child prostitution, BSAF intended to undertake an study on the subject matter.

### **Objective of the Study**

To visualize the situation of Child Prostitution in Bangladesh in terms of estimated numbers, magnitude of the problem, major causes and consequences, impact on the lives of children and probable solutions to overcome the problem.

### **Scope of the Study**

1. Grave situation of child prostitution in Bangladesh scanned figured and documented.
2. Cause and consequences, implications of child prostitution in children's life and violation of child rights in relation to UNCRC to be determined.
3. Analysis of child prostitution from social and economic point of view has magnified.
4. Livelihoods of the child prostitution and their family have captured.
5. Numbers of case studies/relevant pictures of child prostitution to be included.
6. A comprehensive but specific recommendation has been made for each of the important stakeholders who can play important and effective role to protect the children from this heinous exploitation.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

### **Gathering relevant documents and reviewing the same**

The Research Team has gathered and reviewed relevant documents possessed by the government and non-government institutions on child prostitutions in Bangladesh in order to have a clear understanding on the subject matter. These documents included policy framework of the GoB, national and international instruments to fight against child prostitution, various study reports, annual reports, paper clippings and good practices.

### **Consultations with key stakeholders**

In order to explore opinions, concerns and experiences the Research Team had series of consultations with the key stakeholders that included UNICEF, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Save the Children, BSAF and its member organizations namely Aparajeyo Bangladesh, BNWLA, Incidin Bangladesh, Nari Unnayan Shakti, PIACT Bangladesh, SEEP, SSS, TdH-NL implementing projects and programmes to fight against child prostitutions in various levels.

### **Individual interviews**

The Research Team interviewed 202 persons using semi-structured questionnaire that included children engaged in prostitutions in recognized brothels and floating places, their employers/clients, parents and neighbors to have an insight of their life situations.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

The Research Team organized 10 focus group discussions with different stakeholders directly/indirectly associated with the issue of child prostitutions in Dhaka and outside Dhaka. A total number of 120 people participated in these discussion sessions.

### **Visiting brothels and shelter homes**

In order to have a first -hand experience from the children engaged in prostitutions and their employers and parents the research team has visited two brothels (Doulotdia and Tangail), two shelter homes and drop in centers run by INCIDIN Bangladesh and SEEP. A total number of 112 child prostitutes, 10 parents of prostitutes and 80 stakeholders that included masi, local leaders, clients, government and non-government officials were interviewed.



## Criterion of Informants

Types of Informants	Number
Children engaged in brothel based prostitution	45
Children engaged in street based prostitution	90
Children engaged in hotel based prostitution	44
Children engaged in residence based prostitution but living in the street	11
Parents	10
Employers and neighbors	28
Clients	14
NGO personnel	46
Members of the local government	28
Government officials	6
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>322</b>

## Limitations

Though attempt has been made to depict the situation of children forced into prostitution, the study had a number of limitations. Sample size of the study was 322 respondents which is small comparing to the number of children forced into prostitution and stakeholders. Out of a total number of 14 brothels only two (Tangail and Doulatdia) were visited.

The report was written based on qualitative data. However, some quantitative data have been used from the secondary sources. Though trafficking in persons, pornography and commercial exploitation of children are interlinked and hard to draw fine lines, the report mainly focused on commercial sexual exploitation of children. Differences of physical and psychological condition may influence a person to be engaged in different sexual behavior.

## **Chapter - 3: Situation of Child Prostitution in Bangladesh**

### **Magnitude of the problem**

In Bangladesh, though the sexual work is not discussed in public, a widespread prostitution with an estimated number of 100,000 women regularly working in brothel, hotel and residence-based or street as commercial sex workers. A little amount of information about sex commercial sex workers is found from government or non-government organizations.

According to BBS (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children – Pilot Survey 2008 – Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) there are about 15,702 girls sex workers/prostitutes in Bangladesh. Out of these 15,702 girl prostitutes, 430 are brothels, 2, 498 hotels, 4,088 streets, and 8,686 are residence based prostitutes. It is believed that number is under reported and much higher than the statistics due to the clandestine nature of this trade and lack of attention to the issue.

The magnitude of the problem is wider than thought. Data can be found about the children living in the brothel. However, data or information is missing about the children working in the street, flats or hotels. It was found that number of prostitution in brothel is decreasing due to different interventions by mostly non-government organizations though the number is increasing in street, hotel or flat based prostitution.

### **Process of Trapping into Prostitution**

In the name of social and religious norms and values, girls and their families are abused, tortured, marginalized, excluded and ostracized often by the leaders of the communities. A girl is usually blamed as instigator of eve teasing or event when raped to save the perpetrator who is usually either a powerful man or son of a powerful family. During the local salish (ADR), vested interest group often get together to ostracize the family from the community to grab resources particularly land and property.

It was also found that taking the advantage of vulnerability of children either they are trapped or abducted to brothels based or other forms of prostitutions. Young girls coming to the cities in search of livelihood are often vulnerable to be ending up in prostitution. There are pimp active near and even inside garment industries, train, bus, launch stations, slums that allure young girls with the false promises of marriage, love affair or arranging a better job; pimps understanding the need or vulnerability of particular girl.

A good number of the prostituted children particularly children engaged in street and hotel based prostitution have experienced sexual abuse and exploitation during their service as domestic helper either by the man employer, his sons or adult men working as drivers or guards at private houses.



Whatever the initial traps are, the most common strategy of the recruiter usually is raping the girl in group. Children in prostitution were sexually abused and mostly raped before they end up in prostitution. Once the girl is repeatedly and group raped, she breaks down mentally and starts feeling scared to face the society. At a point, the girls lost all hope of life and compelled to accept whatever she is asked to do; selling her body that continues for rest of the life.

### **Locations**

There are brothel, hotel, apartment and street based prostitution. Quite a number of hotels basically near bus, train, and launch terminals rent room or spaces to facilitate prostitution. Street based prostitution is widespread in parks, near bus, train stations and also in places nearby majar (grave of religious leaders), government offices (as this are closed after the evening), cinema hall, buildings under construction etc. Apartment based prostitution is hard to locate as it is spreads in major cities all over the country particularly in Dhaka.

### **Age group**

The average age of the children engaged in prostitutions is 14 years. However, there are many young children aged between 10-12 years are trapped into prostitutions. Only about 15% children belong to 15-18 years of age group. Children selling sex in street are relatively younger followed by brothel and residence-based.

### **Living conditions**

Children forced into prostitution live in a subhuman condition. Brothel based prostitutes live in dirty and polluted surrounding. Quite a number of them even have to share their rooms with one or two persons that are mostly kacha or semi-pucca (made of brick wall with tin roof). On an average, more than 50 people have to share one tube well for water and one unhygienic latrine. They are consistently watched, live under threat of physical or psychological in nature when they are new in brothel.

Hotel based prostitutes mostly live in places like slums without much access to safe drinking water, bath and latrine facilities. Street based prostituted children live in the street, train stations, bus terminals. These children living in the street even do not have any specific place to sleep, rest, and access to latrine and water etc.

### **Food and health**

Most of the children forced into prostitution suffered severe hunger when they were recruited. They were not given food even for two three days and in some cases as long as they denied to accept the offer of prostitution. Children forced into prostitution are still sufferings and struggling for food every day. It was

found that after paying money to their owners, mastans, police, they have very little or nothing in hand to buy their food. None of them remembered when they had enough food last time. Street based prostitutes are mostly malnourished as they can save very little for food after paying mastan, police and often they have to starve.

Only 25 percent of the child prostitutes reported that they did not have any health problem and the rest experienced multiple health problems such as cut, injury fever, headache, ulcer and sexual diseases during last 1 year. They are highly at risk of STI and HIV/AIDs due to their limited choice to have protected sex and high risk behavior of their clients.

### **Education**

Most of the children interviewed had no or maximum of primary level education only with few exceptions having secondary level education. According to BBS, nearly 46 percent of children forced into prostitution had no school education and 39 percent completed grade five.

### **Relations/ Involvement**

Majority of child prostitutes informed that their family members do not know about their engagement in prostitution. Majority of children informed their families that they work in garment industries in towns due to the fear of being permanently excluded by their family. Moreover, they also fear about the community of ostracizing their families if the community knows about their engagement in prostitution. Most of them do not have any interaction with family other than sending money to their parents or siblings and relatives.

### **Control over financial and other resources**

Though child prostitutes make a good income (Average 5,000-7,000 TK. per month), major proportion of the money are spent to pay back so called debt that the sardarni paid to buy her, for the room rent to brothel owner or Sardarni, mastans, police etc. At the end of the day what prostitutes get is like only food except few exceptions. At a point when the so called debt is paid or the girls grow old make good relation with the mastans or gain some agency they become sardarni themselves. If they do not achieve control over resources, they work as helper of young women for the rest of their life in the old age as masi. It goes on for generations. Street, hotel and apartment based prostitutes also have to pay money to a number of hidden beneficiaries. It is important to note that all sex workers, including children have to go through a bonded period to pay back the so called debt and the bonded period usually lasts for 2-3 years, in which they do not have any control over their income.

## **Perpetrators**

Sardarni, pimps, dalal, mastans, room owners of brothels, are visible perpetrators of abuse and exploitation. However, there are invisible vested interests groups particularly people in powerful economic, social or political positions that are not directly involved but to some extent help this crime to continue and they are also believed to be the indirect beneficiaries of the exploitation game. According to BBS (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children – Pilot Survey 2008 – Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) prostitutes are abused by multiple perpetrators. Among the perpetrator of abuse 50.5 percent were musclemán/ mastan, 41.4 percent police, 34.9 percent clients, 23.3 percent broker, 7.5 percent husband, 4.6 percent babu, 4.4 sardarni and 3.8 percent were others.

Police is believed to be highly corrupted. Rather than saving victims of prostitution, they help the perpetrator to operate the business. Some members also force children to have sex free of cost.

## **Clients**

Clients list is quite long according to the prostitutes. Clients of the prostitutes include people from all strata such as government officials, police, journalist, lawyers, businessmen, NGO workers, drivers, mastans, political workers and leaders, students and other low income groups of populations such as labors, rickswa-pullers and small businessmen frequently visit commercial sex sellers. It has been learnt that in recent year number of younger clients like school going boys are increasing. According to the BBS report businessmen were the most common clients 59 percent followed by students, police/Ansar, laborers and servicemen (ranging 30 percent - 40 percent. They entertained, on the average, 4 clients per day with some variations. Street girls and boys each entertained 3 clients and brothel girls entertained 5 clients per day on an average.

## **Leaving prostitution**

None of the children want to continue prostitution. However, it is not that easy to leave prostitution as all arrangements are in place to hold them back as long as girls are attractive and active in sex services, generate income for the vested interest groups. Even if brothel or room owners leave them, girls cannot go out as no one will accept in the so called 'good society'. Girls know that knowingly no one will give them any space in the society or no option for them to make a living outside prostitution. They are also frightened to think about the stigma waits in the outside world.

## **Causes of Child Prostitution**

Causes of child prostitution might differ from one another and are diversified. However, it was found that major causes of prostitution are unemployment, vulnerability due to lack of education, lack of awareness, poverty driven by economic disparities, injustice, social stigma, marginalization, gender discrimination, lack of proper implementation of legal instrument, grid of the powerful section of the society, dysfunctioning families etc.

A significant proportion of people are living below the poverty line mostly in remote areas that are excluded from basic services. Most of the labour force is engaged in informal low productivity and low income jobs as opportunities for formal services are inadequate. Access to secondary and tertiary education is limited and the quality of education at all levels is deficient. National literacy rate 56.8 percent while rural literacy rate is 52.8 percent. The poor group of population is severely disadvantaged in terms of ownership of assets and has inadequate access to institutional finance as well as to basic services including quality education, healthcare, water and sanitation. Though GNP growth is expected to be more than 6 percent, inequality has increased in the country due to widespread corruption, injustice, marginalization, inequitable socio-economic structure, gender discrimination.

In general, people in Bangladesh are not aware of various dimensions of child prostitution. Lack of awareness of children and their families about the possible dangers or traps of perpetrators put children at risk of prostitution. Children from broken, poor families and unemployed parents have to accept lucrative and decent job offers in cities fall prey of recruiters of prostitution. Children are also kidnapped and then forced to work as prostitutes. Death of one or both parents and lack of social protection system or public services also drives children from home to city streets, make them vulnerable to prostitution.

Often girls have to move from rural to urban areas in search of employment or to escape poverty, gender discrimination, and economic marginalization. Some families are driven away by the powerful section of the society to grasp properties particularly land. Social injustice towards poor and their children drives them seeking release from what has become a prison like existence and fear in the society. Policy planners are not aware enough to understand the interdependence of prostitution and underdevelopment as well. Most of the time children forced into prostitution cannot get back in the society for social stigma and required interventions to address the issue. Powerful groups who benefit through putting children into prostitution do everything possible to continue their business.



As mentioned earlier, a good number of the children forced into prostitutions have experienced sexual abuse and exploitation during their service as domestic helper by the male members at private houses and ended up in prostitution.

### **Implications of Child Prostitution in Children's Life**

This is beyond debate that prostitution is a complete violation of the rights of the child. Torture, abuse, deprivation and marginalization create frustration, anger in children's mind. Child prostitution often results in serious psychological harm, including anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders. Prostitution has profound impact on their lives. Children forced into prostitution are deprived of basic necessities and rights like quality food, shelter, education, medical care. They do not enjoy any rest, recreation and leisure. Prostitution and related abuse, exploitation has various negative implications in children's lives.

Prostitution is harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Mental and physical damage caused by prostitution creates frustration, mistrust about people, life and society. As a result, children get involved in drugs, extortion theft, and violence. Unprotected and unsafe sexual behavior of adults often increases their vulnerability of unwanted pregnancy and HIV/AIDs. Unwanted and early pregnancy threatens the life of the child prostitute and the baby in the womb as well. Reintegration into society or family is almost impossible due to social stigma, lack of alternative work skill and livelihood opportunities.

### **Is Prostitution Legal?**

Controversy and dilemma exists answer to the question whether prostitution is legal or not. Prostitution has not been recognized as legal profession nor has it been declared as illegal. According to the legal system, a person having no means of survival may choose this activity as their profession provided that it has been chosen without compulsion and has reached an adult age. Children are not supposed to be involved or choose this activity as profession. However, in reality it has been found that number of young children have received certificate from their employers affidavit given by notary public as adult and statement of acknowledgement to be engaged in the profession.

### **Child Prostitution from Social and Economic Point of View**

Prostitution has severe negative economic and social impacts. A child forced into prostitution could grow as a productive individual and could make economic contribution for greater interest of the society. Rehabilitation, integration of prostituted children is an expensive task for a society to bear. It could have been financially beneficial for the nations to protect children from being prostitutes. It is believed that unprotected and multiple sexual partners increases the possibilities of HIV and AIDs for both clients and prostitutes.

This study has found that number of young, mostly school and college going boys are increasing as clients; they are extremely vulnerable and at risk of having sexual diseases and HIV/AIDs. In the future, more health problems and economic expenses are waiting for the society to carry.

Often children forced into prostitution are condemned, seen as anti-social entities. Economic deprivation, social marginalization and stigmatization often lead these children to learn hatred. They feel like taking revenge that perpetuates violence in the society.

### **Livelihoods of the Child Prostitution and their Families**

Acute poverty driven by marginalization, economic and social injustice is amongst the most important reasons for children to be trapped into prostitution. Commercially exploited children forced to sell their body to make a living and mere survival and they are victims and subjected to human rights violations. It was learnt that income vary depending on the beauty, age and places, on an average, majority of the girls (83%) engaged in prostitution earn less than taka 3000 a week. They have to pay back the so called debt from their earnings to their madam who claims that they paid money during their recruitment. In addition, these girls have to pay for their room/space, food, clothing, etc. About 61 percent of the children have to send money to their parents, siblings and relatives. They have very small amount or nothing left for them and savings for the future is almost impossible. The poor saving status indicates the level of vulnerability of the girls in coping with emergency situations and their incapability to invest in any form of livelihood options. It was found that majority of the children engaged in prostitution are from poor, marginalized, socially excluded and dysfunctioning families. Most of the families do not know about their children's involvement in prostitution. Those who know do not feel comfortable to take the child back as the family members will be ostracized from the society. No one will marry sisters of a prostitute and no one in the society will mix up with any of the family members. Therefore, families mostly hide the issue even if they come to know. They pretend that the child is either working in a garments industry or working as housemaid in the city. It was found that quite a number of families largely depend on the money sent by the child prostitute.

## **Caso Studies**

### **INCIDIN Drop in Centre is a hope for Sohana**

Sohana (fictitious name for privacy) a girl of about 14-15 years has been working as a street prostitute in Komola pur area for last 3-4 years. She is from Dewangonj, Jamalpur district. Her father Karim Mia was a farmer and mother was housewife. Both father and mother died when Sohana was 10-11 years old. After that she was living with her elder and a younger sister. Her elder sister was married. The elder sister used to make her work all day. Furthermore, she was beaten if any little thing went wrong. The sister and brother in law in fact wanted to grab the whole land their parents left for them. To escape intolerable torture, she left home one day and got into a train. At one stage she wanted to get down but it was late. She did not even know where she was going. She had about 10,000 taka and some gold as she brought all her belongings given by her mother. She met some young women during her journey that she trusted. She shared her life experience and those women were very sympathetic. She kept all her money and gold with those women. She understood that she had made a mistake when those women forced her to have sex with 3 men when they got down from the train in Kamalapur train station. In the meantime, these women took away her belongings and she was left alone in the station for the whole night.

She was sexually abused and raped several times. She tried her best to protect herself but failed. She had no money to eat and no place to go. After that, for survival, she had to start selling her body. She roams around the station in the evening and sells sex till early morning. She is making about 300-400 taka on an average if she gets good client. Every day, she has to entertain almost 3-4 clients. At the same time she has to entertain two three police personnel or local mastan free of cost. She and her fellow prostitutes have to face various tortures if they do not sexually entertain these groups. She tries to save young girls from being raped when they are trapped into this life as new comers. Several times, she asked for help of law enforcing agencies to rescue these girls from being raped. However, she could not save and finally, those girls got into prostitution.

Now, she can see a bit of light in the murky world as INCIDIN Bangladesh has arranged a place for children like Sohana to rest, clean and low cost food. She is learning how to read and write in this drop-in-center. She is also saving a little bit of money to get out of this profession. Sohana is also learning how to make handicraft. She is dreaming to leave this profession in the near future. She believes that no one comes to this profession by choice. To save children from prostitution, she suggested training police personnel about the vulnerability so that they are sensitive and do not further abuse children. Government, NGOs and local community can also play very effective role in helping children not to get in and to get out who are already in this profession.



## **Community need to be sensitive to save children from prostitution**

Jahanara (Fictitious name for privacy) now is about 16 years old. She is from Araihaajar, Narayangonj. Her father married second time just after her mother died about four years ago. She is the eldest daughter among 3 sisters and four brothers. One of her brothers has gone abroad for work. All her brothers are married and sisters are unmarried. Brothers working in different shops in Dhaka city and two of her younger sisters are living with her grandmother and going to school. Her father had to sell the last piece of land they had to pay the cost of her brother's migration abroad. Her step mother was very frightening as she used to beat her all the time. Her father got sick and still is not fully cured.

She came to Dhaka in search of a job. She had worked in a garments industry in Badda area. She was living with other women in a slum. Her boss a supervisor started complaining about her work as she denied having sex with him. She complained but the authority did not take any action against the supervisor. After a certain time he stated torturing Jahanara in many ways. She had to leave the job. Then she was in problem of paying for her room rent and food.

She shared her vulnerable situation with other women living in the slum. One woman offered her a job. The women brought her in Kamalapur area and handed her over to five six young men. Those men took her in a nearby building under construction. They raped her all night long and left her when they found her bleeding. In the morning she found herself near the Kamalapur train station. She had a feeling that she has lost her virginity that she will never get back. She did not even feel like going back to her family or in the room she was before. One woman gave her a meal. She begged for work and food. No one listened to her and looked at her with bad intention. They also used many abusive words. She was treated as a prostitute. However, after two days of starvation, she decided to go for prostitution for survival. Within a few days, she started to earn about 400-600 taka every night. Unfortunately she could not save money as mastan and police took her money several times. Moreover, she was also addicted to various drugs like 'dandy', local alcohol, and so on.

She is coming to the drop-in-center for last 3-4 months. Now, she does not have to take drugs anymore. She is saving money in a NGO in Mayakanon area. She is also sending some money for her sisters. She does not want to see her sisters because she thinks if they come to know about her profession, they will hate her. She sometimes wonders why there is no law to punish the perpetrator and why everyone blames the abused children. Jahanara thinks that this society is a place for fighting for food, money and power. She suggested working with the community closely so that children are not abused in anyway. Otherwise more and more children will get into this profession.

### **Born in brothel: Is it a human life**

Kajol (Fictitious name for privacy), a girl of 15 years, was born in Doulotdia brothel as her mother is also a prostitute. She started working as prostitute when she was 10 years old. Her mother Beauty now 40 years came to this brothel when she was only 12 years old. Beauty was brought by an agent of brothel owner from Jamalpur district with allurements of work. Her parents were poor working as day laborers. A woman who used to live in the town and visit their village often, offered her a good job in Dhaka. Beauty understanding her parent's vulnerability wanted to take the job offer. However, the woman brought Beauty in Doulotdia brothel and sold her to a masi. The masi forced her to have sex with clients. Beauty had to serve even up to 10 clients a day when she was young. A man called Babu was her regular client who offered her to marry. Beauty fell in love with Babu as Babu was very caring. When Beauty was pregnant, Babu told her to lend him money for business. Beauty handed over about taka 10 thousand. After that Babu came to Beauty once and disappeared for ever. Kajol does not remember her father Babu. All that she remembers is her mother serving her clients who were mostly brutal. At a stage her mother's clients started to decrease as she was picking up age. About five years ago, they started to face problems to pay their room rent in the brothel which is about taka 300 per day. Kajol and her mother had to face torture by clients, room owner, police and mastans when they denied paying them money or serving free of cost. Some of her mother's clients were more interested in her rather than her mother. Under the circumstance, Kajol had to engage in prostitution. She believes that her next generations may have to spend all their lives in brothel as no one will help them to come out.

### **When community force a girl to be prostitute**

Joti (Fictitious name for privacy), a girl of 13 years brought to Tangail brothel last year. Joti's father a farmer was quite well off. They had about 3 acres of cultivation land and a house with three rooms. Her father died of a heart attack three years ago. Joti and her mother were living in the house renting the cultivation land to their relative Shahjahan. At the beginning Shahjahan was nice but at a point he denied paying the amount that he promised. During a salish about the land, the leaders of the community ostracized Joti and her mother blaming that her mother had unethical physical relation with a man living in the nearby village. They were asked to leave the village within one day. Finding no option, her mother and Joti had to leave the village and go to one of her uncle's house. A woman wanted to help them in getting work in Dhaka. Joti dreamed about the new life without knowing that she will be sold in the Tangail brothel. First three/four days she denied to serve as sex slave. She was severely beaten and was not given any food. At a point she had to agree what the masi asked her to do. Life in brothel is inhuman. To use the latrine, each time she has to wait more than an hour. More than 50 people use one tube well. Now she serves 4-5 clients a day. Her mother knows that she is working in Tangail as a house maid.

## **Chapter - 4: Intervention of national and international organizations**

### **Intervention by the GoB**

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) is maintaining a database on violence against children. The Ministry collects information from deputy commissioners, district offices of Department of Women Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs. Moreover, MoWCA maintains regular liaison with the Ministry of Home Affairs to collect information on legal cases relating to commercial sexual abuse of children and women.

The Department of Women Affairs under MoWCA operates safe homes in different areas in the country. These centers are offering psychosocial counseling, legal aid, recreation, basic education, life skills training and medical treatment as well rehabilitation and reintegration services.

The Government has introduced safe motherhood for all mothers including the girls under 18 years of age, who are already engaged in prostitution through Maternal and Child Welfare Centers. The intervention for safe motherhood provide iron, folic acid, vitamin A supplement to the target population aiming to reduce the maternal malnutrition below 20% by 2015. The other interventions include, training programmes for Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA), antenatal care, safe delivery parental care, family planning services. Several Life skill based training and awareness creation campaign on HIV/ AIDS for adolescents has been conducted for various target group/stakeholders.

In order to address the needs of the child victims, the MoWCA has been implementing Multi-Sectoral Program on Violence Against Women (MSPVAW). Eight One-stop Crisis Centers (OCC) are being run by the MSPVAW of which seven are located at divisional level medical college hospitals and one at district level medical college hospital. The main objective of the OCC is to provide all required services for women and child victims of violence. The OCC provides health care, legal assistance, DNA test, social services and psychological counselling.

A National Trauma Counselling Center (NTCC) has been established in 2009 for providing psychological counselling to the women and child victims of violence. NTCC has been arranging awareness and supportive counselling training programs on for teachers and students of different schools and colleges, including on problems among children and adolescents and on how to deal with such problems and psychological counselling services for women and child victims etc.

There are six divisional support centers for women and children victims and seven support centers in seven districts under the Promotion of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Project of DWA where children and adolescent

victims of violence are given shelter with all necessary support, including legal support. Besides, there is one safe custody for women, adolescent and girls in Gazipur district where victims get shelter and legal support.

The MoSW has initiated a project to provide community based care for orphans and vulnerable children. The goal of this on-going project is to better protect the rights of orphan children and children made vulnerable by natural disasters through promoting family based care, providing conditional cash transfers, strengthening the capacity of social welfare and establishing case management, follow - up and referral system.

One of the components of the Child Sensitive Social Protection System in Bangladesh(CSPB) Project of the MoSW is to taking care of the children without parental care by preventing separation of children from families, reintegrating children with their families, extended families etc.

Under the Child Welfare and Development Program, DSS established three institutions to provide training and rehabilitation services to the destitute children. Destitute and street children are admitted into the destitute Children Rehabilitation Canters. They are provided with formal education and vocational training and counselling with the objective of rehabilitating them into the society.

With a view to addressing the problem of the socially disadvantaged girl children (e.g. sex workers), the MoSW initiated a program titled "Training and Rehabilitation Center for the Socially Disadvantaged Girls" by establishing six centers in six divisions. The objective of the program is to provide food, care, protection, development and socio-economic rehabilitation of the child sex-workers, including the distressed girl children who are exposed to risk of abuse or violation. Each center has a capacity for 100 girls.

However, the above mentioned interventions are not always focused on child prostitutions and limited to certain areas, mostly scattered and have very little linkages with one another. People in need of these services are not provided with information of availability and accessibility of services. Lack of coordination among various ministries and organizations also made these services inaccessible to children in need. There is also question about the quality and appropriateness of services provided by the GoB.

### **Intervention of national and international organizations**

In addition to the GoB, several national and international NGOs with support from development partners are providing various services for children in need of protection from abuse and commercial sexual exploitation. A number of NGOs



operate residential safe homes for children victim of commercial sexual exploitation and abuse. Many NGOs are involved in raising awareness, child sexual abuse/exploitation, awareness on HIV/AIDS and STIs, drugs etc.

### **Aparajeyo Bangladesh:**

Aparajeyo Bangladesh a national NGO working to protect the rights of children, used to provide shelter services for exclusively designed for prostitutes. At present, Aparajeyo has about 12 shelter homes in Dhaka they are not running any shelter exclusively for prostitutes but for street children where children engaged in street prostitution also receive services like temporary shelter, food, primary health care. They have a referral service system with police stations. If someone is found vulnerable, police refer the child to Aparajeyo Bangladesh for temporary shelter. Aparajeyo Bangladesh is also working to create employment opportunities for adolescents rescued from prostitution to integrate into mainstream society.

### **Bangladesh National Women' Lawyers Association (BNWLA):**

BNWLA has been implementing a project for child prostitutes with the financial support of Plan International. They deal mainly with the legal issues. They have been providing free legal support to these children. BNWLA is also working in advocacy for policy changes at the national level. BNWLA runs shelter home for vulnerable groups who are victims of trafficking and prostitution.

### **INCIDIN Bangladesh:**

INCIDIN Bangladesh has been working long to uphold the rights of children. In addition to research and advocacy, INCIDIN run shelter homes and drop in centers for street children and children forced into prostitution with support of Save the Children. Children receive food, temporary facilities for shower, rest, sleep, play, watch TV etc. in these drop in centers. Other services provided in the drop in centers are counseling on anger management, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, vocational training, non-formal and formal education. There are provisions for boys to spend day and night in the drop in center and only night for girls. The non-formal education provided by INCIDIN aims at putting children into formal education system.

### **Nari Unnayan Shakti (NUS):**

NUS is running a hostel for women. However, if a case of prostitutions come, they keep them in the hostel or refer them to other NGOs who have shelter home. NUS was running shelter homes for street base prostitutes from 2002-2008. They are also providing vocational training for street children so that they have some skill to make a living.

## **PIACT Bangladesh:**

PIACT is implementing a program for children forced into prostitution with the support of Manusher Jonno Foundation since 2003. The project with preventive and curative approach is under implementation in Doulotdia brothel. As preventive measure awareness among the prostitutes are raised to prevent minors from getting into this profession.

They provide rescue, integration, and education services for school going children of prostitutes, primary health care including use of contraceptive measures etc. They have developed a peer group and formed a rescue committee who inform immediately if a child is brought for prostitution and rescue them to be rehabilitated or reintegrated back in their family if parents are found. They have developed a working relation and have consultation with notary public so that they do not provide any certificate with fabricated information about the age of children.

There are also activities to have dialogue with Thana Health Officer for medical checkup for accurate age of a person. Now, prostitutes have their own organization "Obohelito Shishu Abong Mohila Unnayan Shangtha". They are also closely working with police as they are the one responsible to restore law and order in the society.

## **Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF):**

The Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is a national organization that works to promote human rights and governance aiming at bringing about changes in the lives of the most marginalized people. The portfolio of MJF work is divided into Right and Governance with a strong Capacity Development component and has divided its entire portfolio into 4 programs such as: a) Rights of the Marginalized, b) Combating Violence Against Women, c) Protection of Working Children and Vulnerable Workers, and d) Ensuring Responsiveness of Public Institutions. MJF defines "marginalization" as occupational (sex workers, fisher-folk), minority status (religion, caste, ethnicity), hard-to-reach areas (char, haor or hill areas), disability, different sexual orientation/sexual minority and HIV infection.

Sex Workers' issue, MJF works with four NGOs and eight sex workers' organization/Self Help Group in Faridpur, Rajbari (Goalondo), Mymensingh, Manikganj, Madaripur, Jamalpur, Jessore and Dhaka districts, more than 5000 sex workers are reached through MJF support mechanisms. The main focuses of these projects are Peoples' organization building; Access to services & livelihood options, Social Inclusion, Empowerment of sex workers, and Policy Advocacy.

### **Save the Children:**

Save the Children (SC) is working in Doulotdia brothel for long. However, protection programme started a year ago. The programme is on child protection and education. A total number of 1500 sex workers and children of sex workers are the beneficiaries of this project. SC's stand point is calling them sex workers rather than calling them prostitutes. Recently SC is planning to work out of brothel as children are also engaged or victims of sex work outside brothel too. SC is working from the care and protection angel. SC is also working with adolescent and youth and providing life skill training to adolescents. SC is working with the local government. A committee called Child Protection Committee has been formed with relevant stakeholders in the project area.

Back in 1995, when SC started working with the issue, there was exclusive school for children of sex workers. Gradually community integration process started. Out of 500 students in SC run school (now government school) 250 students are of sex workers and 250 are from the mainstream community. Early childhood development has been emphasized. Mothers never thought about their children's future before the SC started the programme. But now they are concerned about their children. It would save the new generation from being sex workers.

### **Social and Economic Enhancement Programme (SEEP):**

Basically street children who are forced into prostitution come in the shelter home run by SEEP. They can stay in these shelter homes and drop in centers 24 hours if they feel insecure outside. There are two shelter homes, one for boys and the other for girls. Out of a total number of 50 children 20 are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Basic education, shelter, food, basic health care counseling, recreation and vocational training are provided for these children.

### **Society for Social Services (SSS):**

Society for Social Service (SSS) has been working at Tangail brothel since 1998 with the financial support of TdH-Netherlands. Many of them knowingly or unknowingly conceive and give birth to children and there are number of children under 14 years. They live in a filthy and unhealthy atmosphere which is not at all conducive to foster children. The girls who grow old or come of age begin to accept mothers' occupation. On the other hand, due to negligence and lack of care, the boys are compelled to indulge in many unsocial crimes i.e. theft, hijack, swindling, extortion, drugs, black marketing and murder. SSS came forward to rescue these children and began to implement the activities providing them with accommodation, education and health services freely.



SSS has established Sonar Bangla Children Home (SBCH) to rehabilitate children rescued from the brothel. At present 101 children (55 boys & 46 girls) are placed in the Children Home who are in active process for rehabilitation in the mainstream society after having requisite education and training. Facilities available in this Home include free accommodation, food, clothes, health care, primary education, sports and cultural activities, vocational education and training. A primary school has been founded at the Home. In addition students of class six to class ten reside in the Home attend the classes at the different local high schools in the community and some students are also supported to continue their higher education in the colleges and Universities. During the year 2010 & 2011 SSS undertook a programme to prevent and rescue the newcomers (sukrees).

#### **Terre des Hommes-Netherlands:**

Terre des Hommes-Netherlands (TdH-NL) under its "Stop Child Exploitation Programme" initiated intervention for the children of about 800 sex workers of Tangail brothel in collaboration with its local partner SSS Tangail since 1998. Their main focuses have been protection of children from prostitution, abuse and exploitation. It has been providing education, skill training, rehabilitation and health care to the sex workers community. A significant number of children have been protected from prostitution and rehabilitated through this project.

TdH-NL has been supporting the sex workers on the street through its local partners SEEP since 2004, providing shelter, food, health care, education, psycho-social counseling, skill training, rehabilitation and re-integration.

TdH-NL has been supporting advocacy, campaign, lobbying and research through its local partner BSAF for the proper implementation of the Optional Protocol on "Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Besides it has also been implementing programme for the elimination of hazardous child labour, anti-trafficking of children with advocacy and campaign, providing education and skill training to the working children and child domestic workers.

#### **UNICEF:**

UNICEF Bangladesh is working to create a culture of respect for children's protection rights through development of child rights based and gender appropriate policies, advocacy, a change of societal attitudes, strengthened capacity in government and civil society responses to protection issues and the establishment of protective mechanisms against abuse exploitation and violence.

The non-governmental organization Association of Voluntary Action for Society (AVAS) runs a drop-in centre in Barishal that is supported by UNICEF's HIV/AIDS programme. Through the drop-in centre, sex workers have access to condoms to prevent HIV infection, as well as other basic health services, counseling and HIV education.

UNICEF is working in Baniasanta Brothel situated near Mongla port area in Khulna. UNICEF started working in this brothel since the SIDR heated the area. UNICEF found that people living in this brothel are much neglected and absolutely no services for them (children) existed when UNICEF started working.

UNICEF supports reintegration services for children living on the streets in six city corporations. Children in drop-in centers receive basic education, counseling, life-skills training and job placement, as well as food and shelter. Family support and community outreach activities encourage parents and community members to interact with the children and help them readjust to life in the general community.

It is important to mention that the services provided by the national and international NGOs are in most cases rehabilitation oriented, which is definitely important. But more important is to prevent and eliminate this type of worst forms of child labour, which is really missing. Many NGOs have been working for long years in a particular brothel to provide services to child prostitutes without any solid result. Moreover, there is strong lack of coordination and cooperation among the service providers.

## **Chapter - 5: International instruments, national laws and policies**

As a member of the international community, Bangladesh has ratified a number of international instruments in relation to child rights in general and child prostitution in particular. These Conventions are binding upon the members of the United Nations and International Organizations. Followings are some of the conventions and protocols and relevant clause that were ratified by the government of Bangladesh.

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

#### **Article – 2:**

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

#### **Article – 6:**

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

#### **Article – 16:**

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honor and reputation.

#### **Article – 19:**

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

#### **Article – 20:**

1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.

**Article – 27:**

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
2. The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.
3. States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

**Article – 32:**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

**Article – 33:**

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

**Article – 34:**

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

**Article – 35:**

States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

**Article – 36:**

States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

**Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography****Article – 1:**

States Parties shall prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

**Article – 2:**

For the purposes of the present Protocol:

- (a) Sale of children means any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration;
- (b) Child prostitution means the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration;
- (c) Child pornography means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.

**Article – 8:**

- 1. States Parties shall adopt appropriate measures to protect the rights and interests of child victims of the practices prohibited under the present Protocol at all stages of the criminal justice process.

**Article – 9:**

- 1. States Parties shall adopt or strengthen, implement and disseminate laws, administrative measures, social policies and programmes to prevent the offences referred to in the present Protocol. Particular attention shall be given to protect children who are especially vulnerable to such practices.
- 2. States Parties shall promote awareness in the public at large, including children, through information by all appropriate means, education and training, about the preventive measures and harmful effects of the offences referred to in the present Protocol. In fulfilling their obligations under this article, States Parties shall encourage the participation of the community

and, in particular, children and child victims, in such information and education and training programmes, including at the international level.

3. States Parties shall take all feasible measures with the aim of ensuring all appropriate assistance to victims of such offences, including their full social reintegration and their full physical and psychological recovery.
4. States Parties shall ensure that all child victims of the offences described in the present Protocol have access to adequate procedures to seek, without discrimination, compensation for damages from those legally responsible.

#### **ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour**

##### **Article – 1:**

Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency.

##### **Article – 3:**

For the purposes of this Convention, the term "the worst forms of child labour" comprises:

- (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

#### **Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

##### **Protection of right to life and personal liberty**

32. No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty saves in accordance with law.

##### **Prohibition of forced labour**

34. (1) All forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.



## **The Penal Code 1860**

The Penal Code provides in the following sections protection to women who are victims of the sexual offences of illicit intercourse, such as:

Section 364A - Whoever, kidnaps or abducts any person under the age of ten, in order that such a person may be or subjected to slavery or to the lust of any person shall be punished with death or with imprisonment for life or for rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to 14 years and may not be less than 7 years.

Section 366A - Whoever, by any means whatsoever, induces any minor girl under the age of eighteen years to go from any place or to do any act with the intent that such a girl may be or knowing that it is likely that she will be, forced or seduced to illicit intercourse with another person shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to 10 years and shall also be liable to fine.

Section 373 - Whoever buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of any person under the age of eighteen years with the intent that such person shall at any age be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or knowing it likely that such person will at any age be employed or used for such purpose with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend 10 years and fine. Any prostitute or any person keeping or managing a brothel, who buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of a female under the age of 18 years, shall until the contrary is proved, be presumed to have obtained possession of such female with the intent that she shall be used for the purpose of prostitution.

## **The Children Act, 1974 (revised in 2012)**

The Children Act of 1974 provides safeguards for any child who needs care and protection. The Children Act, 1974 defined role and responsibilities of juvenile courts to ensure protection of all kinds for the children either as offenders or victim.

The new draft of the Children Act has been approved by the Cabinet in 2010 in order to ensure the rights of the children in alignment with the CRC.



## **The Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act, 2012**

This Act was enacted to prevent and suppress human trafficking, including children, and ensuring protection and rights of the victims of human trafficking and ensuring safe migration. The spirit of the Act is to prevent and suppress human trafficking related inter-country organized crimes in conformity with the international standards. A National Plan of Action (NPA) has also been formulated in 2012 to implement the Act.

Human trafficking has been defined as "If a person is sold or bought, transferred or exiled, consigned or arrested or harbored by force or intimidation, cheating or using socio-economic, environmental or any other forms of vulnerability for sexual exploitation or abuse or economic exploitation or any other form of exploitation inside or outside the country".

According to the Act, maximum punishment for any person committing crime of human trafficking will be life-term imprisonment and minimum punishment will be five years rigorous imprisonment and fifty thousand taka fine.

In case of human trafficking by the organized group for their common interest, each member of the group will be given life-term imprisonment or minimum seven years rigorous imprisonment with five hundred thousand taka fine.

If any person kidnap, hide or detain someone for sexual abuse and exploitation he/she will be declared guilty under this Act and will be given maximum ten years and minimum five years rigorous imprisonment and twenty thousand taka fine. In case of trafficking someone inside the country or bringing from other country by cheating or allurements for the purpose of sex work or other forms of sexual exploitation, the person will be punished for maximum seven years and minimum five years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of taka fifty thousand.

## **National Plan of Action for Children (2005 – 2010)**

The Constitution of Bangladesh reiterates the state's responsibility to protect children's well-being and rights. In accordance with CRC, CEDAW and the constitution of the country, the Government has committed itself to adopting a rights-based approach to prevent abuse, exploitation, violence and discrimination. The Plan of Action of the UNGASS, titled, A World Fit for Children, provides broad goals to be achieved by 2010.

The NPA for Children (2005-2010) recognizes that all children, particularly those who are vulnerable, have the right to protection from abuse, exploitation and violence. While this NPA covers the main aspects of child protection, it also utilizes the policies of existing NPA against the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking.

## **Challenges**

Despite initiatives undertaken by government and non-government organizations, there are many challenges in addressing the commercial sexual exploitation and child prostitution in Bangladesh.

Determining the number of children engaged in prostitutions is one of the major challenges. Actual number of child prostitutes is much higher than recorded. Lack of awareness of the concerned stakeholders poses another challenge to protect children from getting involved in prostitutions and reintegrate them in the mainstream society. It is hard to rehabilitate or reintegrate victims as families and society do not want to take them back due to possible social stigma. Law defines children forced into prostitution as victims but in practice they are treated as criminals during law enforcement. Children do not have access to information about the existing support services for them. Given the fact that child prostitution is a very sensitive and complex issue, number of existing interventions is inadequate. Moreover, services provided by the GoB and NGOs are stereo typed in nature and not fully relevant to the needs of the children. Lack of capacity of service providers to deal with the issue is also a big concern.

## **Comments and Recommendations**

Child prostitution is a significant problem that has yet to receive appropriate attention of stakeholders. Interventions are needed to address the economic, social, cultural, political factors that push children into and help perpetrators to continue prostitution. Preventing children from entering into forced prostitutions will never be fully achieved without political will and proper implementation of the laws.

Interventions need to be designed in such a manner so that no children are forced into prostitution; existing prostitutes can be gradually withdrawn and be integrated in the society. And children of prostitutes do not get involved in the same profession. Following specific recommendations can be made to protect children from vicious cycle of prostitution:

### **National and Local Level Awareness Campaign**

Majority of people are not aware of manifestation of prostitution and ways to address the problem. It is important to launch a national and local level campaign to raise mass awareness so that children are not pushed into prostitution. Community can help vulnerable children and their families to be saved from the perpetrators who often victimize them taking the advantage of social exclusion. Awareness also needs to be raised so that the society does not consider the victims of prostitution as anti-social elements but the perpetrators.

## **Law Enforcement**

Dealing with the issue and children forced into prostitution needs sensitivity. Often children forced into prostitution are tortured and violated by the members of the law enforcement agencies. Therefore, proper training to deal with the issues need to be provided. During legal proceedings people involved often are not aware of the fact that children need some privacy. Children are violated of their right to privacy. Therefore, sensitizing training also needed for professionals involved with the legal process. Training needs to be designed also to bringing perpetrator and their allies under the justice system. Although laws against violence and child prostitution exist, their implementation remains weak.

## **Rescue, Rehabilitation and Integration**

To save children forced into prostitution, local and national strategies to rescue, rehabilitation and integration should be properly implemented. Rescue, rehabilitation and integration facilities are inadequate comparing to the number of children forced into prostitution and their need. More drop-in shelter, shelter homes, financial, educational, skill development, health, care and other supports systems need to be initiated.

## **Responsive and Sensitive media**

Media coverage on the issue is less than expected. Some media personnel need to be sensitized so that the issue is highlighted in both electronic and print media. It is also recommended to presenting the news in a way that does not violates the privacy of the exploited children.

## **Collaboration and Cooperation**

Various government departments, NGOs and international organizations are working on the issue. However, their working approach, strategies and interventions varies widely. There are also possibilities of duplication. More collaboration cooperation is needed among the service providers to maximize the outcome of their efforts in protecting children from prostitution.

## **Research and Advocacy**

Only a few researches have been carried out on the issue of child prostitution. These researches are missing details such as social, economic and political process of increasing vulnerability of pushing children into prostitution. Most of the research covered a small sample size and very less is known about the perpetrators or beneficiaries, who are the powerful group benefiting out of prostitution, how corruption or lack of good governance helps prostitutions to

continue. Accurate number of children is also missing which is important for designing appropriate interventions. Therefore, more research with empirical information is required. To implement existing policies and formulate new policies, advocacy with the relevant stakeholders are also recommended.

### **Good Governance**

Lack of good governance put children particularly from poor, disadvantaged and marginalized groups into vulnerable position to be trapped into prostitution. Prevalence of corruption is widespread in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is recommended to establish a good governance system with transparency, accountability in both public and private sectors.

In conclusion, it can be said that the time has come to critically think whether we should act to stop child prostitution from the society or we should provide services to the victims of child prostitutions. Mopping the floor with the water tap open could be an endless process. Therefore, we need to have a strong political decision that we don't want our children to end up a heinous profession like prostitution and all our efforts should be geared towards achieving that objective.

## References:

Ali Masud, Ali Mustaque, Sarkar Ratan, *Misplaced Childhood: A Short Study on the Street Child Prostitutes in Dhaka City*, 1997, Bangladesh.

Ali Masud, Sarkar Rattan, *The Boys and the Bullies: A Situational Analysis Report on Prostitution of Boys in Bangladesh*, ECPAT International and INCIDIN Bangladesh, June 2006, Thailand.

*Assessment of Vulnerability of Boys: A Situation Analysis on Prostitution of Boys*, Association for Community Development (ACD), 2008, Bangladesh.

Boneschi, S., *Human Rights Report on Brothel-Based Women in Two Bangladesh Towns: Sex Workers of Jessore and Jamalpur*, Terre des Hommes (Italy) and European Commission, 2004, Bangladesh.

*Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Pilot Survey 2008*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, August 2009, Bangladesh.

Donna M. Hughes, Laura Joy Sporcic, Nadine Z. Mendelsohn and Vanessa Chirgwin, *Factbook on Global Sexual Exploitation*, Coalition Against Trafficking in women, undated. (<http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/banglad.htm>)

*Fifth State Party Periodic Report under the CRC*, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2012, Bangladesh.

*Kere Nea Shisob (Stolen Childhood)*, Manusher Jonno Foundation undated, Dhaka.

*Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009, Volume I: Technical Report*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF, June 2010, Bangladesh.

*National Child Labor Elimination Policy 2010*, Ministry of Labour and Employment, GoB, March 2010, Bangladesh

*National Plan of Action for Children 2005-2010*, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, July 2006, Bangladesh.

*Report on National Child Labor Survey 2002-2003*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, December 2003, Bangladesh.

*Report on Sample Vital Registration System 2010*, Bureau of Statistics, October 2011, Bangladesh,

Salma Ali, Sen Natasha, Hecht Eric Mark, *Report on Laws and Legal Procedures Concerning the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children In Bangladesh*, ECPAT International and Plan International October 2004, Bangkok, Thailand.

*Sexual Abuse and Commercial Exploitation of Children*, UNICEF Bangladesh, March 2011, Bangladesh.

*Sexual Lifestyle and Socioeconomic Profile of the Brothel-based Sex-workers*, Bangladesh Medical Journal 2010, Vol.39 No. 3

*Sixth Five Year Plan FY 2011-2015*, General Economic Division, Planning Commission, GoB, December 2011, Bangladesh.

*Third and Fourth Periodic Report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, August 2007, Bangladesh.





**Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF)**

House No. 42/43 (Level - 2), Road No. 2  
Janata Cooperative Housing Society  
Ring Road, Adabar, Dhaka - 1207. Bangladesh

Phone: 88-02-911 6453, Fax: 88-02-911 0017

E-mail: [info@bsafchild.net](mailto:info@bsafchild.net), [bsaf@bdcom.net](mailto:bsaf@bdcom.net)

Website: [http:// www.bsafchild.net](http://www.bsafchild.net)