

**IN SEARCH OF DREAMS:  
STUDY ON THE SITUATION OF THE TRAFFICKED  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM BANGLADESH AND  
NEPAL TO INDIA**

August 2001



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IOM International Organization for Migration  
আইওএম আন্তর্জাতিক অভিবাসন সংস্থা

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**August 2001**

by  
Natasha Ahmad



IOM International Organization for Migration

Natasha Ahmad, a freelance Researcher, prepared this report for International Organization for Migration (IOM). Opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM.

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\* Not included with this document. Available upon request.

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## Executive Summary

Although reliable qualitative data on trafficking from Bangladesh and Nepal to India do not exist, newspaper reports and available information indicate that trafficking has been on the increase. Widespread poverty, mass unemployment and under employment, frequent natural disasters, low status of women and globalization forces have contributed to the increasing trend of trafficking. Poor people, particularly women and children of Bangladesh and Nepal often become victim of unscrupulous recruiters ending up in jobs and living conditions that are completely different from what they had been promised. They often end up in prostitution and virtual household slavery. As migrants in an irregular situation, they are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

To enhance better understanding of the dynamics of regional trafficking and to assist victims which will help to develop a regional strategy to prevent trafficking, International Organization for Migration (IOM) initiated a comprehensive research in 1999. The objectives of the research project were to understand the phenomenon of trafficked women, men and children from Bangladesh and Nepal to India, identify possible areas of assistance to the victims of trafficking and to analyse perception of migration realities in order to develop information dissemination strategies for prevention of trafficking.

The study adopted definition of “trafficking” from the draft SAARC Convention to Combat Trafficking proposed by the Resistance Network and SAARC Peoples Forum as well as the UN Protocols on Trafficking for clearer understanding of the term. The report was based on randomly chosen case studies of 65 persons (51 women and 14 man) from Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi. Out of 65 cases, 58 were Bangladeshi and 7 were Nepalese. Bangladeshi victims went from mainly Jessore, Madaripur, Khulna and Dhaka. Most of the victims were aged 30 and below. Most of the women were married before their departure whereas the men got married after being trafficked or irregularly migrated. Majority of the respondent came from landless families and before living none of the women were sex worker.

The study revealed that low prospects of employment and lack of opportunities were the main reasons for the women and men to venture out for better livelihood across border. The economic compulsion was, however, compounded by other social and political factors. The importance of economic factor in deciding to migrate is, in all probability, due to lack or low level of education among women and men resulting in poor job prospects in the country. A large section of the

respondents, both women and men, came from families, which did not either have any economic resources or had small landholding. Apart from the economic reason, in case of married women desertion, divorce or husband's second marriage, dowry, early marriage also played an important role in pushing women to look for independent living within or outside the country. This made them easy target for the traffickers. Some of the women in exploitative livelihoods were not necessarily trafficked but situation left them no choice but to go out of the country.

As found out in the study, desperate parents or girls themselves often fell prey to promises of marriage which later turn out to be fake. The girls were latter brought to India and sold. All the girls were deceived to leave home with known/unknown persons and were subsequently sold to brothels. Women/girls who were abducted/kidnapped many of them ended up in brothels as revealed in the study.

According to the research, Nepalese respondents could easily enter into India as there is no visa requirement for the citizen of Nepal to enter India and vice versa. They mainly enter through Bihar or through the Darjeeling of West Bengal, which is in the North. In the case of those entering West Bengal from Bangladesh, following are the main entry points of traffickers along the India-Bangladesh border:

- Nadia district of West Bengal is probably the most favourite district of entry. The names of Bongaon in West Bengal and Benapole in Bangladesh is widely known and many people intending to enter, come to this location. Another favourite point in Nadia is Gede-Banpur/Krishnagar. From both these places, a train takes just around two hours to reach Sealdah station in Kolkata.
- Sharsha-Basirhat or Bhomra-Basirhat of Bangladesh lying close north 24 Parganas district in West Bengal which is even nearer to Kolkata than Nadia is a popular point.
- For those who cross the border into West Bengal from the southern side, the entry points are mainly by river and people come to Lakshikantapur, Sonakhali or other parts of the Sundarbans.

- In the northern parts of West Bengal, Hili in Dakshin Dinajpur district is the most common point of entry. Some people also use the Mahananda River to enter Siliguri in Darjeeling district of West Bengal.
- Some also cross over to Bihar or Tripura and then choose their destinations in India.

Fellow villagers constitute the largest category of informants as found in the study. The informants also include close relatives including husbands or ex-husbands, parents. There are also professional middlemen/women or 'dalals' who provide clients with false information. In some cases, boy friends/lovers act as agents who ultimately sell them to brothels. The difference between women and men who came to India was that in many cases women were deceived into believing that they were going for work or for a better life with their "husbands". They were not told about the ultimate fate awaiting them. It is true for those who are now working as cheap labours such as rag pickers, domestic workers etc. This was particularly true of those women who joined the sex trade. There were, however, a few cases where women in desperate need to make a living in the country of origin were told that they would have to join the sex trade even before they left their own country.

The process of getting assimilated into a new country as "victims" of trafficking or after irregular entry, as revealed in the research, was not an easy process. But, most cases, the persons involved have been able to improve their economic condition. The "victims" were able to get jobs and shelters and had obtained ID Cards, especially Voter Card and opened bank accounts. For a majority of the women (27/51) and men (10/14), there was no problem in social interaction with locals or sending children to school. Those who mentioned of problems were sometimes people under special circumstances, i.e., sex workers of Kolkata. Most of the people did not feel that they had restricted movement within India. There was no problem of moving about from one place to another in Kolkata. In New Delhi, however, few feel uncomfortable lest they drew attention of the law enforcing authorities. The Bangladeshi had relatively easy access to public and private health care facilities but rarely had access to legal services as found in the study. Of the 14 men some were able to start their own business, some joined the workforce as wage labour, some became self-employed as (quack) doctor, taxi-owner or tailor, some were still students (staying in a Short Stay Home) and one became a ragpicker. At least one of them has a flourishing garbage re-cycling business in New Delhi, though he started his career as a ragpicker. Women were also work as domestic workers, factory labour and rag pickers. And some have their own business.

The study identified sex trade as the biggest employer of women from Bangladesh and Nepal in Kolkata. Among women, a fairly large number (23/51) became sex workers and most of them are working in Kolkata. On the other hand, in New Delhi and partly in Mumbai, the most important occupation for women was working as domestic workers or engaged in some kind of cheap labour. According to some organizations working with the sex workers and Indian sex workers in Mumbai, the number of Bangladeshi girls in sex trade was increasing and they are very aggressive in nature. Some of them in Kolkata work as part time sex workers, part time peer educator and were also in business. In Mumbai, one sex worker has now become a brothel-owner and another was working as a peer educator in an HIV-AIDS project.

As revealed in the study, 20/51 women and 6/14 men cherish dreams of going back to their country of origin on day. Some of them have started investing money in Bangladesh by buying land. Some want to maintain a link with their country of origin by getting their sons/daughters married off there. This also indicated the fact that it was not easy to sever links with one's country of origin/birth. The fact remains that in cities like New Delhi or Mumbai there was a constant pressure and threat on illegal migrants to leave the country of present residence. It was less so in Kolkata. According to the study, main sources of feeling of insecurity among the "victims" were communal riots, jail and deportation. Reports of police harassment were also common in New Delhi. Brutal behaviour and sexual abuse while in lock-ups had been experienced by some.

The study concluded that the "victims" of trafficking and other persons in irregular situation were contributing to economy of both the origin and destination countries. The study also made recommendations to effectively addressing the problem of trafficking and which included:

- Bangladesh, Nepal and India need to recognize that trafficking and irregular migration taking place from Bangladesh and Nepal to India. Proper policies should address these realities. Broad based discussions between India, Nepal and Bangladesh should be initiated to evolve an appropriate mechanism to address the problem.
- "Victims" of trafficking and the irregular migrants have the right to livelihood and therefore, steps should be initiated to ensure that.

- Rights' of the "victims" are constantly violated and their basic rights' must be restored by recognizing their presence.
- Corrupt security personnel particularly in the borders of both the countries, should be held responsible for being facilitators of trafficking as well as irregular migration. They should be punished.
- Awareness campaign should be taken up especially along the borders of all the countries to make people aware of the realities of trafficking and violence that they face ever after. These campaigns should take place with the help of NGOs of all the countries are involving local governments, law enforcing authorities and civil societies.
- Development planning and State policies have to be reevaluated in order to involve appropriate strategies, which would address the difficulties of the most vulnerable groups of the societies especially young women, men and children so that they are discouraged to leave the country in an irregular way.

# Introduction

## 1.1 Background:

Over the last decade there has been a significant increase of human trafficking, mostly of women and children, from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India. It is common knowledge that a large number of people, both women and men, from these countries are being trafficked within the country and also across borders through land, water and/or air routes to the countries within South Asia and to Middle East, Europe and North America. The broad economic, social, political conditions associated with globalization process have contributed significantly to the problem. Like trade in commodities, trafficking in human is an integral part of the process of globalization.

For the purpose of this research, we are using the definition of "trafficking" as proposed for the SAARC Convention to Combat Trafficking by the members of Resistance Network and SAARC Peoples Forum and also the definition by the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons;

- 1) **"Trafficking" in person** consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation, forced movement, and/or selling and buying of women/person within and/or across borders by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct and/or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing a woman/person against her/his will without her/his consent in exploitative and abusive situations such as forced prostitution, forced marriage, bonded and forced labour, begging, organ trade, etc.
- 2) **"Trafficking" in children** consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation, forced movement, and/or selling and buying of children within and/or across borders by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct and/or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing children against their will with or without their consent in exploitative and abusive situations such as commercial sexual abuse, forced marriage, bonded and forced labour, begging, camel jockeying, circus and other sports, organ trade, etc.

**UN Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children (September 2000),**

**3) Trafficking** means:

- a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;
- (d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

This report expands further the term 'trafficking' to include undocumented migrant workers who too are trafficked/smuggled across international boundaries and who number in millions. I also would like to mention that though the study was to be based on women and the title says so, but we have also included information from few men. This is because when we went talking to the women the men demanded that they be listened to. They complained that for all matters it is the women who are targeted and they resent the fact that they were ignored by all study groups and even development programs back home.

Trafficking is a result of the disintegration of the livelihood security of people in their own countries. On the other hand, the emerging trend of integration of humans into commercial spheres created by world capital makes women and children of vulnerable communities' prey to the greed of the traffickers. There are reports by different organisations (UBINIG, ASK, BNWLA, GAATW, SANLAAP, LHRLA and others) which shows that persons, specially, women

and children are being trafficked for various purposes including forced prostitution, forced marriage, bonded labour, etc., while children are taken as camel jockeys, and also fall prey in the hands of organ traders. As regards the undocumented migrants, the receiving countries through them lower price and exploit cheap labour.

## **1.2 Objectives:**

India is sharing its borders with Nepal and Bangladesh and over the years it has become a receiving as well as a transit country for Bangladeshi and Nepali trafficked persons and also undocumented/illegal migrants. This research, conducted in 3 major cities of Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi in India, investigates into the phenomena of trafficking in women, men and children from Bangladesh and Nepal as well as illegal migration into India, in order to identify prevention strategies and needs of assistance for those who want to live in the country s/he was once trafficked /smuggled to.

### ***The objectives of this survey were specifically to:***

- a.** understand the general phenomenon of trafficked and migrated women/men and children of Bangladesh and Nepal to India,
- b.** identify possible areas of assistance to women and children who have already been trafficked and migrated to India and,
- c.** identify perception of migration realities in order to develop information dissemination strategies

### ***The survey describes***

- the socio-economic background of the trafficked as well as illegal migrant persons and children
- the motivation behind the decision to migrate
- the pull factors emphasising gender perspective
- the expectation and reality of leaving
- the recruiting process
- the working conditions and access to health/legal/social assistance in India
- future expectations and needs



### 1.3 Methodology

To identify key elements in order to develop an interview guide for this survey, a one-day workshop was held in New Delhi with Dr. Jyoti Sanghera (*Associate, Center for Feminist legal research, and GAATW [Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women] Representative in South Asia. She is also an Independent Consultant in the field of trafficking, sex work, sexuality and migration*). Ms. Saskia Rasenberg, a representative of International Organization for Migration (IOM) and myself was present in this daylong workshop. A strategic planning to carry out the survey was done here. It was also a conceptual clarity session on issues related to trafficking. The identified key elements were later shared with Ms. Meena Seshu, (*representative of Sangram and VAMP who has been working with the women in prostitution in Maharashtra, India for the last few years*) and with Ms. Nandinee Bandyopadhyay (*Advisor, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee [DMSC], a forum of 60,000 sex workers and their children. The founding members of DMSC had come together through their active involvement as peer educators in a STD/HIV prevention intervention program [SHIP], widely known as the Sonagachi Project*) in Kolkata.

After this meeting a researcher and a freelance journalist, was contacted to help conduct the research in India. As a journalist he has done extensive work in issues related to trafficking for the past few years. The out come of the workshop was discussed with him too.

Organizations/groups working on issues related to trafficking in Kolkata (SHIP/DMSC, SANLAAP, SLARTC), New Delhi (Prayas, Savera, Joint Women's Program) and Mumbai (SPARC, IHO, ASA Project, Maitee Nepal-Mumbai, Prerana) were contacted to help in identifying trafficked persons from Bangladesh and Nepal.

A list of things to be discussed with trafficked persons and illegal migrants working in different areas was prepared. Considering the nature of the task, it was felt that a qualitative technique of data collection would be more appropriate. So, the technique of in-depth interviews with semi-structured questionnaires was adopted. The interviews for the study were conducted as per the questions/key elements prepared by the team (of conceptual clarity session).

The target group according to the TOR of the study was interviewed in brothel areas, rehabilitation centers and slums. The interviewees were approached 2/3times. This was done to gain their confidence. We wanted them to open up and also to have faith on us as trafficked persons and/or the illegal migrants evidently have a very insecure life and always fear that they might be forced to leave the country of present residence.

It maybe mentioned that those respondents living in the slums and working in various types of work were purposively selected and approached in order to be able to gather information regarding the probable variety of needs. Moreover only those persons were approached who were accessible and willing to talk.

The survey started interviewing identified persons in Kolkata in May 2000. During May-July 2000 only 14 Bangladeshi women in prostitution and 9 women and 4 men workers/laboures living in slums were interviewed. Five Nepalese women in prostitution were also interviewed during this time. The 2 women who were in the NGO Rehabilitation Center were interviewed later. In Mumbai respondents were approached in brothels (4) and slums (12). There was none in the rehabilitation center. There was no Bangladeshi in the brothel in New Delhi (in JR road) so the respondents came mostly from the slums (13) and Short Stay home (2). To examine a general perspective women with/without organizational affiliations (NGOs, federation, associations) have both been included in the survey. The in-depth interviews in all the three cities were concluded by October 2000.

#### **1.3.1 Coverage:**

This report is based on interviews of a total of 65 persons comprising 51 women and 14 men. Of the total 65 persons, 30 women and 4 men were interviewed in Kolkata; 13 women and 3 men were interviewed in Mumbai; 8 women and 7 men were interviewed in New Delhi.

#### **1.3.2 Data Analysis:**

Though the interviews were qualitative in nature, they were conducted with the help of some semi-structured interview guidelines. After interviews were over, some of the information could be tabulated. The tables have been annexed to this report. Because the

sampling was entirely purposive and random and because of the small size of the sample, absolute number in many cases together with percentages in some cases have been used only while analysing the data.

Large volumes of the information were fully qualitative and are more in the nature of case studies. The case studies were examined individually in order to identify a pattern relating to the phenomena of trafficking. Relevant tables and case studies have been included within the text of this report while detailed case studies and all other tables have been annexed to this report.

### **1.3.3 Organization of this Report:**

The report consists of mainly three aspects relating to trafficking as well as illegal migration. It comprises eight chapters. Chapter 1 began with an introduction to the study and also contained the methodology together with the problems faced in data collection and the limitation of the study. Chapters 2-7 are analysis of the findings based on the data/information collected. Chapter 8 concludes with observations and suggestions based on the study.

### **1.4 Problems in Data Collection and Limitation of the Study:**

While trying to track down and identify 'trafficked' women and children in the brothels, rehabilitation centers and slums, this study came across a large majority who were not trafficked in a strict sense, but (illegal) 'migrants' in common parlance. Respondents for this study therefore include persons deceived/tricked and/or forcefully taken across the border and also those who have gone across voluntarily for various reasons; these people were smuggled in and were illegal entrants resorting to fraudulent means to cross over to India.

The survey started by interviewing the trafficked persons in Kolkata. The groups/organizations (working with illegal migrants and trafficked persons engaged in sex work) that had initially responded positively to this study, did not cooperate when it came to interviewing the members under their organizations. We had to identify trafficked persons mostly by ourselves (in Kolkata), and it thus took almost 3 months to finish the interviews here. It was also difficult to contact all by ourselves, women living in New Delhi and Mumbai

as the present political situation is not very comfortable for the undocumented trafficked persons/ migrants living in these cities of India. At the time this study was being carried out there was a constant pressure from the present government to identify undocumented people and to “push back” by force to the country of origin by the authority. There was thus an unsettled condition among the trafficked persons and/or illegal migrants living in India, more so in New Delhi.

It is extremely difficult for a Bangladeshi woman (like me) without any organizational affiliation in India, to walk into a brothel and interview women engaged in prostitution. Krishnapriya, the researcher employed, interviewed the women in prostitution, as it was easy for a male to go to the brothels as a client. In Mumbai, the women in prostitution were met with the help of the Mobile Clinic run by People's Health Organization (former IHO).

The study failed to interview trafficked Nepalese women/men other than those working as sex-workers, as it is legal for the Nepalese to come and work in India and was thus difficult to identify the people who have been actually trafficked.

With the Nepalese, language proved to be the greatest barrier for unless one knows the language of the respondent it is very difficult to gain confidence in such sensitive an issue like trafficking/illegal migration. Bangla as spoken by the researchers also was a hindrance, as the women from Bangladesh- used to colloquial Bangla, looked with suspicion and distrust. A small *maqri* (ear ornament typical of Bangladesh) worn by me, interestingly, was enough to prove in Mumbai and in New Delhi, that I was from their country of origin, Bangladesh.

Although the objective of this report was to interview trafficked women and children, only two children living in a Short Stay Home (run by PRAYAS in New Delhi) have been interviewed. Contacting organizations dealing with street children was difficult as we failed to identify those organizations that actually worked with such children. It may be noted that there are organizations that work with children of sex-workers and not with the street/floating and/or trafficked children. More over it has also been evident that many organizations, which are supposed to deal with “trafficked women and children”, in reality deal with “only” women (emphasis is on women) and trafficked children are not included in

their activities and various programs. We failed to identify cases where women and children were trafficked for their organs or children who taken as camel jockeys.

And organization like Prerana (working with sex-workers and their children in Mumbai), denied to share information about their work and to see their center just because the researcher had a different position/idea regarding issues related to sex work, the sex workers and their rights.

While taking interviews of persons in the Rehabilitation Center or in the Short Stay Home we faced some difficulties too. In Kolkata, the authorities did not allow us to interview the women in their custody, alone. There was a person on behalf of the Home present throughout the meeting/interview and the women felt uncomfortable which showed in their attitude. While interviewing children in the Short Stay home in New Delhi, we were left alone with the children and they talked freely. In the Government run Home (inside the Tehar Jail premises) the authority did not allow us to take interviews of persons as their cases were under trial in the court.

The trafficked women/illegal migrants who were interviewed did not allow the use of tape recorders as they feared that the information might be used in public and/or media, which will help the authorities to identify them easily. The information given out by them could not be also written down as it distracted the women from talking. The write up was always done later by recall memory and some hurriedly taken down notes – which forms the basis for the main body of this report.

## Profile of the Respondents

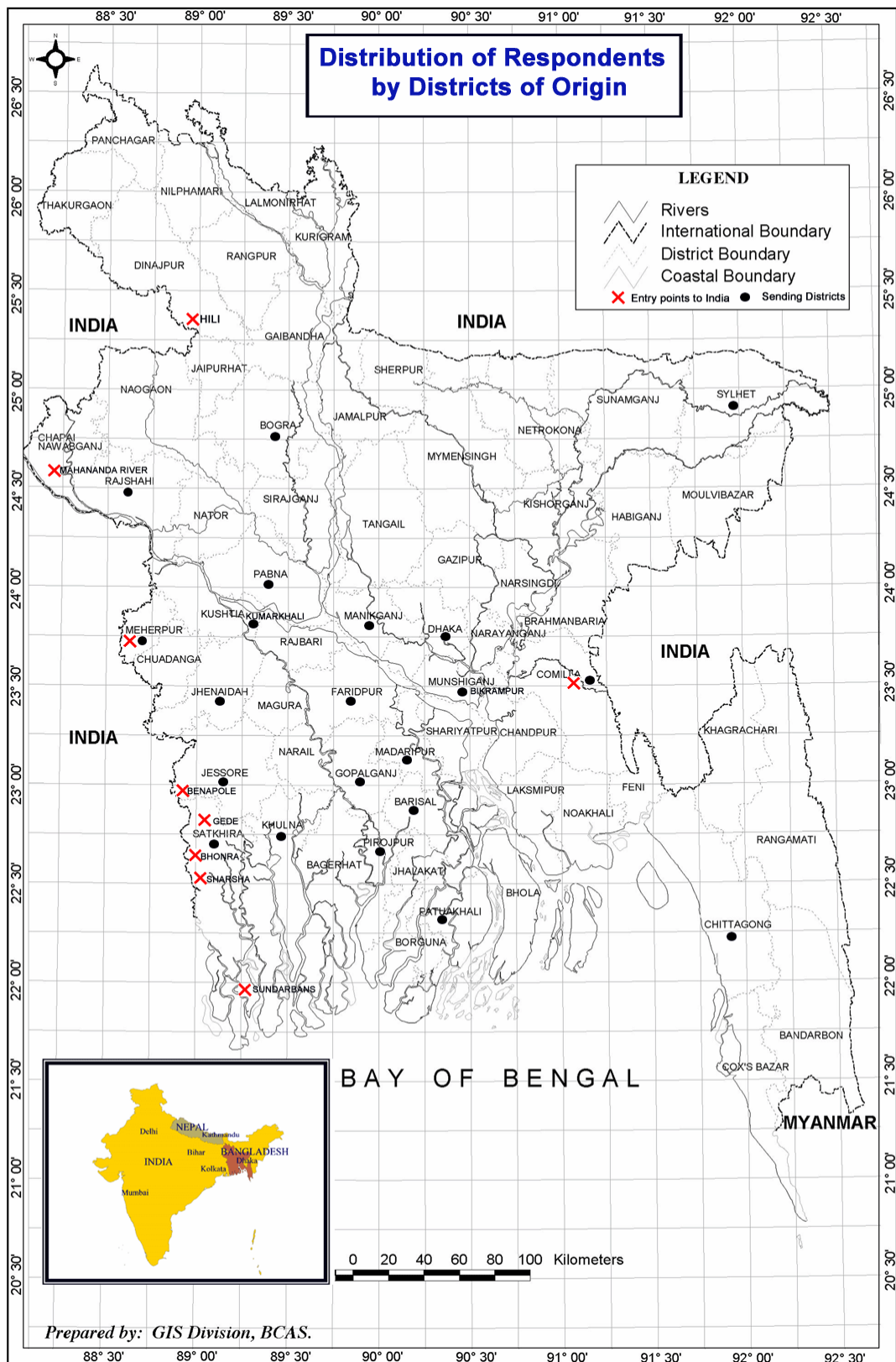
### 2.1 Background of the Respondents:

#### 2.1.1 Country and District of Origin:

Of the 65 persons interviewed, the majority (58) were from Bangladesh and only 7 were from Nepal. Of the 58 persons from Bangladesh, the districts which sent more than one person to India, Jessore reportedly tops the list (15), followed by Khulna(9), Barisal(5), Madaripur(5), Patuakhali(3) and Dhaka(3). Bikrampur, Comilla, Rajshahi, Faridpur and Chittagong have 2 each. The rest of the people who came from Bangladesh numbered one each from other districts. It was felt that the places of origin and the time span of their settling down in India, was not being correctly reported. There apparently was a need to conceal facts by the respondents, especially the period of stay –the longer the stay more the right to stay on.

It is to be noted that the districts, where most of the respondents reportedly belonged to were located just across and along the Indian border (*Map. 1*). Of the 7 who came from Nepal, adequate information was not available to suggest any such pattern. (*Table 1*)

<b>Table: 1 Distribution of Respondents by District of Origin</b>				
<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>	<b>Mumbai</b>	<b>New Delhi</b>	<b>Comments (Districts sending more than 1person)</b>
Those from Bangladesh	Khulna – 6 Barisal – 4 Patuakhali – 3 Faridpur –2 Jessore – 2 Bikrampur – 2 Chittagong – 2 Kumarkhali – 1 Pabna – 1 Manikgonj – 1 Dhaka – 1 Bogra – 1 Satkhira – 1 Meherpur – 1 Rajshahi – 1	Jessore – 10 Gopalganj – 1 Dhaka – 1 Khulna – 1 Rajshahi – 1 Jhenaidah – 1	Madaripur – 5 Comilla – 2 Khulna – 2 Jessore – 2 Sylhet – 1 Barisal – 1 Dhaka – 1	Jessore – 15 Khulna – 9 Madaripur – 5 Barisal – 5 Patuakhali – 3 Dhaka – 3 Bikrampur – 2 Comilla – 2 Rajshahi – 2 Faridpur – 2 Chittagong – 2
Those from Nepal	Hetora –1 Trisul – 1 Biratnagar – 1 Birganj – 1 Khalidunga – 1	Narayandhan – 1	Gorkha – 1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	



### 2.1.2 City-wise Distribution of Respondents by Gender:

Of the 65 respondents, the majority were women (78.5%) and only 22% were men.

**Table 2** presents the distribution of respondents by city and gender. Out of the total respondents, 34 were interviewed in Kolkata, 16 in Mumbai and 15 in New Delhi. Of the total 15 who landed in New Delhi, nearly half were men (7/8). The proportion of men is much lower in Kolkata (4/34) and also in Mumbai (3/16) (**Table 2**).

<b>Table: 2      Distribution of Respondents by Gender</b>					
Gender	Kolkata	Mumbai	New Delhi	All	Percentage
Women	30	13	8	51	78.5
Men	4	3	7	14	21.5
All	34	16	15	65	100.0

### 2.1.3 Age of the Respondents:

Age is an important demographic variable for a study on trafficking. It not only determines the push and pull factors of migration, influences views and needs of the victims but it indicates the capability of adaptation under changing circumstances - the younger being more flexible and receptive to ideas and enterprise. The majority of the respondents have been found to be young of age. In other words about 63% of the women are aged between < 20 to 30 years and the proportion of men in the same age group is about 43%. A clear difference between men and women can be observed. In case of women, the majority is under 30 while for men the opposite is true - about 57% of the men are in the age group of 30-40. Again while the men are more or less restricted within the interval class of 36-40 years of age, women are spread out in all categories of the age group.

Distribution of respondents by age and cities reveal that of the 30 women who ended up in Kolkata, an overwhelming 80% (24) are currently within 30. (**Table 3**)

<b>Table: 3      Distribution of Respondents by Age and Sex</b>									
Age	Kolkata		Mumbai		New Delhi		All		
	Wome n	Me n	Wome n	Men	Wome n	Men	Women %		Men %
Upto20	2	-	-	1	-	2	2	3.9	3 21.4
21-25	8	-	1	-	1	1	10	19.6	1 7.1
26-30	14	2	5	-	1	-	20	39.2	2 14.3
31-35	2	2	1	-	1	1	4	7.8	3 21.4
36-40	3	-	4	2	1	3	8	15.6	5 35.7
41+	1	-	2	-	4	-	7	13.7	0
Total	30	4	13	3	8	7	51		14



### 2.1.4 Educational Status of Respondents:

Apart from other implications, educational status of respondents has bearing on their overall vulnerability and bargaining power. In this respect, lack of literacy for most and low level of education of the remaining few seem to be the general pattern. Thus, of the total women, the majority of about 71% (36) are illiterate and another about 18% (9) has studied upto the primary classes (I-IV).

Of the 14 men, the situation is slightly different as half of them have studied upto the primary level while only 2 admitted to being illiterates. (**Table 4**). Among these two one had come to India with his parents and was very poor.

<b>Table: 4 Distribution of Respondents by Education</b>									
Education	Kolkata		Mumbai		New Delhi		All		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men %
Illiterate	19	-	11	-	6	2	36	70.6	2 14.3
Can Sign	-	-	-	1	-	-	0		1 7.1
Primary	7	2	1	2	1	3	9	17.6	7 50.0
Middle	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	3.9	1 7.1
Upper	-	-	-	-	-	1	0		1 7.1
No info.	2	1	1	-	1	1	4	7.8	2 14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>

### 2.2 Family background:

Of the total respondents, about 23% (15) have lost both their parents, and about 26% (17) have only one parent living. Of these 17, an overwhelming 94% (16) have lost their mothers and most have stepmothers at home. Case studies reveal that stepmothers were a reason for many a woman to be pushed into leaving parental homes and make an independent living outside/elsewhere. Twenty-seven respondents have both the parents alive and 6 did not provide any information. (**Table A1**). Nineteen of the respondents have both brothers and sisters while 23 have neither. Of the remaining 23, nine have either a brother and 14 have a sister. (**Table A2**).

A little more than half of the respondents reported belonging to landless families (37/65: **Table 7**). In the Bangladesh-Nepal context this amounts to belonging to poor, mostly wage labour families. On the other hand only 27/65 (42%) families had some land.

Parent's occupations have not been responded to by most of the respondents. However amongst those who provided with the information it is apparent that when most fathers were engaged as farmers/wage labours, the mothers were mostly home-managers.

**(Table A3)**

### 2.3 Marital Status: Before and After Coming to India:

There seems to be sharp difference between men and women in terms of marital status before and after coming to India. Of the 14 men, 9 disclosed their marital status before coming. None was married then. But today, 11 out of 14 are married. Thus the proportion of those who married after coming to India went up for men dramatically.

In contrast, of the 51 women, 17 did not indicate their marital status before coming. Among the remaining 34 women, 17 were married, 9 deserted and/or divorced and 3 were widowed. But after coming to India, today, the situation is somewhat different and interesting. The number of women who did not disclose their marital status remained almost the same as before (16). Of the remaining 35, the number of those who considered themselves to be married in the past had come down from 17 to 12 while the number of unmarried in the past which was only 5 went up to 13 at present (*Table5*).

<b>Table: 5 Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status</b>							
<b>M. Status</b>	<b>Past</b>				<b>Present</b>		
	Women	%age	Men	%age	Women	%age	Men
Unmarried	5	9.8	9	64.3	13	25.5	3
Married	17	33.3	0		12	23.5	11
Deserted/ abandoned/ Divorced	9	17.7	0		7	13.7	0
Widow	3	5.8	0		3	5.9	0
No Response	17	33.3	5	35.7	16	31.4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>

Analysing individual cases it was revealed that women in the age group of 36 and above and who had described themselves as married in the past kept quiet (no response) as regards their present status. While many a women who had not responded to the past status declared that they were currently unmarried-these respondents, it may be mentioned, were mostly sex workers and in Kolkata.

## 2.4 Number of Children: Before and After Coming:

A difference regarding number of children in case of women and men respondents is quite apparent. As stated above with more men marrying after coming to India it is natural for the men to be having more children than what they had before. Thus, at the time of leaving their country, only one of the 14 men had children. Today, 8 of them have children.

On the other hand, of the 51 women respondents, 27 did not have any children at the time of coming into India. Those who had children then, numbered 24. Today 32 of the women have children (*Table 6*). However what is important to note here is the fact that there is not much change in the number of children between past and present for the women. The number of children for the women did not increase in the same proportion after coming to India as the men. The rate of increase of children by the men between the two time periods has been great. The significant relationship between women, work and the number of children is quite apparent.

<b>Table: 6 Distribution of Respondents by Number of Children</b>								
<b>Children</b>	<b>Past</b>				<b>Present</b>			
	Women	%age	Men	%age	Women	%age	Men	%age
None	27	52.9	13	92.9	19	37.3	6	42.9
1	5	9.8	0		14	27.4	1	7.1
2	5	9.8	0		5	9.8	3	21.4
3	8	15.7	0		8	15.7	2	14.3
4+	6	11.8	1	7.1	5	9.8	2	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

## 2.5 Land Ownership:

In Bangladesh where land is not only an important source of income but is also a determinant of economic position and social status, 15 respondents were absolutely landless owning not even a homestead plot. Fifty respondents owned only homestead land and among them 29 were also owners of agricultural land.

<b>Table 7 Past Ownership of Land</b>		
<b>Ownership Of Land</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%age</b>
Homestead	29	44.6
Homestead +Farmland	21	32.3
None	15	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	

Women in Bangladesh, who have the legal rights to land and property, even if owners of land (agricultural/homestead), generally fail to establish effectively their rights on it. However it is interesting to note that despite such a situation, 14 women have bought land in their own names after going to India –of them 7 had no land whatsoever in the past. Of the 14 who bought land, 8 are owners of agricultural land today.

## **2.6 Occupational Status: Before and After Coming to India**

*Tables 8* presents with the past and present occupation of the respondents. A difference between men and women regarding their past and present occupation is evident. For the women, of the total respondents (51), more than half (28) were home-managers before coming to India. But after coming to India, only 5 can claim this status today. Apparently a very high number of women have been dispossessed of their past status of home-managers. Important is the fact that out of the 28 women who were home managers before, 8 have turned into sex workers after coming to India. Also of the total about 12 % were unemployed, but after coming to India all are working.

In case of women and sex trade as an activity, a drastic change can be noticed. Only two women were casual sex workers before coming to India. But after coming, as many as 45% (23) women have become 'formal' sex workers --19 in Kolkata and 4 in Mumbai. Amongst them one woman in Mumbai has become a brothel owner while yet another woman in Mumbai who was previously involved in the sex trade, now works as a peer educator for a project. In Kolkata, one woman, is also working as a peer educator while still being actively engaged as a sex worker.

Of the total 23 sex workers – 19 are in Kolkata. Thus out of a total of 30 women in Kolkata, more than half are engaged in the sex trade. In Mumbai of a total of 13 women, 4 were sex workers. None of the respondents in New Delhi were engaged in this trade. This could be due to the fact that there is more surveillance over the only known red light area in New Delhi (at GB road). No Bangladeshis - known locally as "people from Joi Bangla", have been found here and the Nepalese too keep inside and are not visible. It maybe mentioned that here in GB Road brothel we came across sex workers from West Bengal who were victims of deception and intra-border trafficking.

The second most important occupation that women were presently engaged in is domestic workers/help. Out of the 51 women, only two used to work as domestic help before coming

to India. Today, 13 work as domestic helps. In Mumbai and New Delhi, a large proportion of the respondents are engaged as domestic workers.

As observed from the tables it is evident that most men in the past were either unemployed and/or worked as a cheap/child labour. There were also others who worked as a tailor/barber. At present there is a noticeable change for them as most are involved in small business and are self-employed. Of the 4 men in Kolkata, two are in business, one is a tailor and another is a rickshaw van puller. Of the three men in Mumbai, one is a taxi-driver, one is a factory worker and another an unskilled labourer.

It is important to note that in the past 3 women were directly involved in farming while no man was in this occupation. It is also distressing to note that activities like rag picking or begging which the respondents, male or female, did not engage in before in their own country, were being considered as occupations by 4 women and 1 man now in a foreign country.

Table: 8    Distribution of Respondents by Past and Present Occupation								
Occupation	PAST				PRESENT			
	Women	%	Men	%	Women	%	Men	%
Home-manager	28	54.9	-		5	10.0	-	
Student	1	1.9	3	21.4	-		2*	14.3
Unemployed	4	7.8	4	28.5	-		-	
Wage/Cheap/ Factory Labour	4	7.8	2	14.3	2	3.9	2	14.3
Farmer	3	5.9	-		-		-	
Sex Worker (full/part time) / Brothel Owner/ Peer Educator	2	3.9	-		23	45.0	-	
Domestic Help	2	3.9	-		13	25.5	-	
Child Labour	2	3.9	1	7.2	-		-	
Tailor/Barber Shop Owner	3	5.9	4	28.6	-		-	
Craft-person, Development Worker	2	3.9	-		-		-	
Small Business (fruit seller/ garbage whole seller)	-		-		1	1.9	6	42.8
Self Employed (Quacks, Taxi driver, Van-rickshaw puller)	-		-		-		3	24.4
Beggar/ Rag-picker	-		-		4	7.8	1	7.2
Others (Rescue Center, Drug peddler)	-		-		3	5.9	-	
Total	51		14		51		14	

- Student but staying in a Short Stay home for children in New Delhi.

**Table 9** presents the situation of children of respondents who are growing up in India today. Most of the children (41.6%) go to non-formal school (in slums and madrasahs) with the boys also attending proper schools and then also working after school hours. They work mostly as rag pickers/waste collectors and also as shrimp peelers, in garages, ply rickshaws, domestic work and others and thereby supplement the family's income. Some also beg.

<b>Table: 9 Distribution of Respondents by Their Children's Current Occupation</b>								
Occupation	Kolkata		Mumbai		New Delhi		All	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls %age	Boys %age
<b>Infants/Young Child</b> (between the age of 0-5)	3	5	1	1	3	1	7 18.9	7 13.7
<b>Student</b> (Madrasa /Non formal School)	6	6	5	8	6	5	17 45.9	19 37.3
<b>Wage/Cheap/Factory/ Garage /Labour</b>	-	5	-	5	-	3	-	13 25.6
<b>Domestic Help</b>	-	-	3	-	6	-	9 24.4	-
<b>Self Employed</b> (Helper in Taxi , Van-rickshaw puller)	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	3 5.8
<b>Beggar/ Rag-picker</b>	4	4	-	-	-	2	4 10.8	6 11.8
<b>Others</b> (Jobless – staying in Bangladesh)	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3 5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>51</b>

### Summary: Profile of the Respondents

- Of the total 65 respondents, 58 are from Bangladesh and only 7 are from Nepal.
- Of the total 65 respondents 51 are women and the rest 14 men. The men have largely gone to New Delhi (7), followed by Kolkata (4) and Mumbai (3). Most of the women (30) have come to Kolkata, followed by Mumbai (13) and New Delhi (8).
- 33/58 of those who have come from Bangladesh have come from the bordering districts of Jessore(15), Madaripur (5), Khulna (4). There are 3 from Dhaka and two each from Bikrampur, Comilla, Rajshahi and Barisal.

- The current age of most of the women (32) is within 30 years of age. About half of the total men (6/14) are within the same age range.
- Majority women are (36/51) illiterates. Only a few (9/51) have studied upto the primary level. Among the men, however, half (7/14) have studied upto the primary level.
- Majority of the respondents comes from landless families.
- Most women were married from before. More men married after coming to India.
- Number of children for men after coming to India increased quite significantly. For women the number has not increased in the same ratio.
- Majority of the women (28/51) were home-managers before coming to India. None was a "formal" sex worker. But after coming to India today, only five were evidently home-managers while 23 had become sex workers.

## Reasons for Leaving

In this study on trafficking, apparently, most movements involving men and women, have been voluntary. But behind each voluntary movement there evidently are reasons that range from sheer poverty to deception by known persons to legal complications. Individual reasons of leaving the home country also apparently have been influenced by persons who were involved with the respondent's movement. They were the people who for various reasons of their own, provided with information (often incorrect) regarding the options/opportunities across the border, lured them with promises and helped them to be smuggled out of the country. A difference in reasons, between men and women, that triggered the illegal but voluntary movement across the border maybe perceived from *Table 10*.

<b>Table: 10 Promises of Prospects in India that Lured the Respondents to Cross</b>									
	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women %age	Men %age	
Cheap labour	8	2	2	0	8	3	18	35.3	5 35.7
<b>Domestic work</b>	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	9.8	0
<b>As bride / home-manager</b>	8	0	2	0	0	0	10	19.6	0
<b>Sex worker</b>	7	0	2	0	0	0	9	17.6	0
<b>Others</b>	4	2	2	2	0	4	6	11.8	8 57.2
<b>No Response</b>	3	0	0	1	0	0	3	5.9	1 7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>

While people, both men and women, migrate to other countries for various reasons, historically economic compulsion remains a major factor. In our sample of 65, as many as about 61% (39) have migrated for direct economic reasons (30 women and 9 men). *Table 11* gives the distribution of the respondents by the reason of migration.

While poverty and therefore economic factors are important in motivating people to migrate or in making them easy target of trafficking, the economic factor may be compounded by other social factors or special circumstances. In real life situation, it is not always possible to identify the relative importance of the various factors. Keeping this in mind, the term economic factors are being used here in a very broad sense.



<b>Table: 11                      Distribution of Respondents by Reason for Leaving</b>								
<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Economic:</b> For work/ income/ better options/loan recovery	12	3	10	-	8	6	30	9
<b>Deception</b> <b>i./Better life</b>	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
<b>ii.(Sham)Marriage</b>	6	-	1	-	-	-	7	-
To work in Sex Industry	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	-
Kidnapped	2	-	1	-	-	-	3	-
Absconding for Political/legal reasons	1	-	-	2	-	-	1	2
Family quarrel	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Others (visit relation, medical treatment, got stuck in India, with parents)	1	-	1	1	-	1	2	2
No Response	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>14</b>

It has already been seen (*Table 4*) that a vast majority of the women are illiterates. For men also, the basic level of education is low. Another important factor to note is that for a very large segment of about 68 percent (44/65) the rural family did not have any agricultural land (*Table 7*). For those 32.3 percent (21/65) who had agricultural land, the amount of land possessed was very small. Evidently some respondents reported loss of land to meet such basic expenses like medical treatment and social compulsions of dowry. There are also a few families, who had lost their land to river erosion. Although these are not unique cases, for the national picture (in Bangladesh) regarding landlessness is more or less similar, but for a country where, a vast majority of the people, are directly dependent on agriculture, loss of land for any reason whatsoever, can be devastating. So, at least a major section of the sample comes from a background of illiteracy, low education, poverty, landlessness and unemployment. For such people, the economic factor may take various forms.

One important issue, which needs to be raised is that these specific factors of illiteracy, landlessness and poverty are not unique only for those who chose to come to India or become easy prey of trafficking. For every such person who came, many more did not come. So, there may be some critical factors, which influence the process in an environment of general poverty. These factors may vary from person to person and from place to place. Following is an attempt to discern a pattern, if any. The case studies (CS) illustrating the

various reasons and factors behind leaving home have been drawn from the three cities of Kolkata (CS,K), Mumbai (CS,B) and New Delhi (CS,D).

### **3.1 Marital Status and Women:**

#### ***3.1.1 Divorce, Desertion, Remarriage or Ill-treatment by Husband:***

For many women, in the general background of poverty, certain social factors compound their vulnerability. Marriage is universal, specially in Bangladesh, and marital status of a woman is a very important determinant of her standing-in the family and in the society. For some, divorce or desertion or remarriage by the husband or even the death of the husband leaves them with a status, which is mostly to their disadvantage. The changed status leaves them with little options and they are forced to come back, mostly with the children, to their parental homes for support. But parents or brothers may be reluctant to take their charge. The situation is further compounded with the presence of step parents/mothers at home. Even in some families, where the woman owns land, she has little effective right over it. Soon they discover that they have to leave home and support herself /children all by themselves (Case studies nos. CS,K-3, CS,K-4, CS,K-6, CS,K-11, CS,K-18, CS,B-1, CS,B-2, CS,B-5,). India seems to be an easy option.

A case in example is *Bilkis (CS,K-6)*. She was married to *Rabiul*. She was illiterate. At the time of marriage, her stepmother gave her a separate house. Within a few days of the marriage, *Rabiul* left *Bilkis* and it was found that he had sold off the land and married elsewhere. Being illiterate and now without any house to live in, *Bilkis* started working as an agricultural labour. She was befriended by a boatman who promised to marry her. The boatman persuaded / tricked *Bilkis* into leaving her home with him. She was taken to the border in Hasnabad, Bangladesh. Here, she was raped on both sides of the border, first by a personnel of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and then by one of the Border Security Force (BSF), in full consent of the boatman. Later the boatman sold her off at a Kolkata brothel for Rs.6000/-

*Taslima (CS,B-1)* belonged to a large family. Apart from her parents, she had seven brothers and three sisters. *Taslima* was the youngest. She was married to a man who had married earlier but had divorced the first wife. Within a year a son was born to *Taslima*. But after a

*month of her son's birth, her husband left her and went away, leaving her behind with no support. Taslima discussed her problem with her family members. She could not bring up her child in Bangladesh. With her family's consent, she contacted a middleman, crossed the border with the child, came to Mumbai and started working as a labour at a fish market. After her child became ill, she went back to Bangladesh, left her son with her parents and returned to Mumbai. This time she got a job in a stainless steel factory. Now she is married to an Indian and settled there. Her son, from her previous marriage and grown up now, is also staying with her and works as a tailor. Today Taslima is happily settled in India.*

### **3.1.2 Deceit and (Sham)Marriage:**

Illiteracy and poverty make women easy victim of trafficking. Moreover the prevailing dowry system and thus the difficulty of getting married in Bangladesh makes it easier for the traffickers to lure unmarried young women out of their homes. Taking advantage of their situation, some people pretend to become lovers, promise marriage or even go through the process of marriage. Later the poor women are persuaded or deceived into coming to India with the promise of a better life. Often the parents aid in their decision to cross borders in order to get married.

*An example is Salma (CS,K-2). Salma's father had a little bit of land. Salma was studying in a Primary school. In a relation's house, she was befriended by Rashid, who was related to Salma's own maternal aunt. Rashid had sexual relation with her. After a month and a half Salma realised she was pregnant. She wrote to Rashid. Rashid came and told her parents that he would marry her in a mosque. Salma's parents agreed. Instead of the mosque, Rashid took her to Kolkata and handed her over to his contact in Barasat. Salma does not know how much money Rashid got for this. But the contact brought her to Kolkata and sold her off in Kalighat for Rs.2000/-*

*Rabeya (CS,K-5) was about 17 in 1996. She had her parents and two sisters. The father had a little bit of land. Rabeya had studied upto class five. But she started failing in examinations and left school. Promiscuous by nature, she was used to physical relationship with young men quite early in life. She met a good looking young man called Muktar in a neighbour's house. Muktar was an Indian and lived in Kolkata but used to come to Bangladesh from time to time. He continued frequenting Bangladesh for the next two years and used to meet*

*Rabeya. In the meantime, Rabeya's parents had already arranged her marriage elsewhere against her will. Rabeya left Bangladesh with Muktar who went through a marriage 'in a masjid', later brought her to Kolkata and sold her off in a brothel for Rs.6000/-*

*Tara (CS,K-32) is now 19 years old. She used to live in Biratnagar in Nepal with her mother and a married brother and his family. They did not have any land. The brother was an automobile driver, the sister-in-law used to earn through tailoring. Tara herself used to work in a Haircutting Saloon. She fell in love with a local boy. They wanted to marry, but Tara's mother did not agree. Then Tara decided to run away with her lover. The lover brought her to Madhubani in Bihar. After three days the boy left and did not return. Next day she found out that she had been sold off to a man for Rs.5000/- This man resold her for Rs.7000/- in a Kolkata brothel.*

### **3.1.3 Forced Marriage:**

Women have also fall victims to forced marriages. This study has come across two women who was forced into marriage and sold as brides. Take the case of *Kanak Majumder (CS,K-17)*.Kanak comes from a poor Hindu farming family in Faridpur. This village had a few Hindu families and they were creating pressure on the family to arrange for Kanak's marriage. The family was unable to meet the dowry demand-compulsory for Hindu marriages. The father arranged to get her married off with an old widowed man with out any dowry. Kanak who was only 16 refused to marry the old man and told her mother that if she was forced into marriage she would commit suicide. The mother also did not want her daughter to be married to this man. They knew a fellow villager, Gopal, who was a professional middleman smuggling people to India. The mother paid Tk.300 and asked Gopal to drop Kanak to her cousin-sister's place in Dumdum, Kolkata.

*Kanak along with 2 women from the next village left their village. They took a bus to Bongaon and walked a few hours and crossed over to India. They did not face any trouble on their way on either side of the border. They took a train and reached Shealdah station (it should be mentioned that Dumdum is few stops before Shealdah) and again took a bus and came to big railway station. From here on the same night they boarded a train. Kanak had no idea of where she was going and was depending on Gopal to drop her at her cousin's place in Dumdum. After some time she came to know that they were going to U.P.*

*After 2day's of train journey they got down at Mirat and here she was separated from the others and was kept under lock and-key for 14 days. The door would be opened 3to4 times a day to give her food. But at night Gopal used to bring men and they would take a good look at her and leave. Finally she was sold to an old man as his bride for Rs. 10,000. This man took her to a temple and got married to her.*

*Kanak was able to run away from her "husband's" house after a few weeks and reach her cousin's place with the help of the local police. They filed a case and Gopal was arrested in India for selling her as a bride.*

*Yet another case is of Beauty's (CS,D-13). She was divorced with a child and was staying at her paternal house. She was having difficulty at home as she had a step-mother. She was looking for a job as she had a child to look after too. While looking for a job in Khulna Beauty was offered a job in India. Her neighbour's sister, Kohinoor, who was married to an Indian and staying and working there helped people to cross over to India.*

*Beauty left home with them. She did not pay for the passage but saw Kohinoor paying the police and local dalal Tk.100 per person after their arrival in Bongaon by bus. They took a bicycle ride to the local train station and took a train to Shealdah. From there they took a bus to Howrah railway station and got into a Delhi bound train. After a 24-hours train journey they took a bus to Hariyana.*

*Here Beauty started work as a rag-picker under Kohinoor. She was not given any payments. After 5/6months she decided to accompany Kohinoor's brother back to Bangladesh. At the time of her departure Kohinoor refused to pay her more than Rs.2000 and told her that the rest was the cost of her passage which she did not pay while coming to India.*

*After spending few months in Khulna Beauty went back to New Delhi accompanied by her grandmother (mother's aunt). This time she had to pay Tk.600 for her passage and arrived New Delhi without any problem. They were accompanied by another girl who had a dark complexion and therefore her dowry was very steep-she was going to India to get married without/less dowry there. Beauty was becoming a problem for this girl as every one would*

*prefer Beauty as she was beautiful. After about 2 weeks Beauty was asked by her grandmother to leave them.*

*Beauty came back to Kohinoor and started working as a rag-picker again. Kohinoor used to bring women from Bangladesh and used to sell them as brides. After 7-8 months Beauty demanded her money/arrears. Kohinoor instead sold Beauty to an old man from Bharatpur for Rs. 15,000 as his bride. She was made to work as a farm labourer there and managed to run away from there after one and half years. She did find Kohinoor again and asked her to return her money. Later on Kohinoor told her that she would find a good Bangladeshi husband in India for her. Kohinoor did keep her word. Now Beauty is happily married to Tajul Islam and is living in New Delhi.*

### **3.2 Kidnapping/Abduction:**

This study with so small a sample has come across 3 cases of kidnapping/abduction (CS,K-14, CS,K-34 and CS,B-16). With the abducted and then trafficked cases into India it is apparent that women and/or girls are often abducted with the help of known people- as a sequence to enmity or is done with the explicit motive of selling them.

A case of deception and abduction is that of *Mira, 25 years of age and who used to work as a domestic worker in Khaldunga in Nepal (CS,K-34). She came from a very poor family and was not very healthy, physically. One day she went to the mountains to fetch drinking water. On her way back she was offered a truck ride back to her home by a neighbour. She had a long way to go so she accepted his offer. In the middle of the way the boy got off the truck and after few minutes the truck driver along with 3-4 helpers repeatedly raped her. She became unconscious and when she regained her consciousness she found herself inside the empty truck and it was dark outside. That very day she was driven to the Kolkata brothel (her present residence) where the truck driver sold her to a pimp for Rs.3000/=. Now she is 28 years old and works as a sex worker.*

Every kidnapped girl/women do not end up in the brothels. While visiting a NGO run Rehabilitation cum Short Stay Home where the trafficked persons, especially women and young girls stay after their rescue, we came across a Bangladeshi woman, Rahida Shek (CS,K-14). *Rahida was a development worker and a very vocal active woman in her village in*

*Meherpur. After the death of her brothers she was the one to take care of the family land. Her paternal relatives wanted to take the ownership of this land and kidnapped her with the help of the local 'mastans'. She was sleeping in her own house when she was kidnapped and the 'goons' used bombs to scare the people and keep them away. She was blind folded and gagged- all she could do was hear the villagers shouting, that the 'mastaans/miscreants' are crossing the border.*

*Rahida was kept under lock and key for 3 days in an underconstruction building. She was rescued after 3 days by the Karimpur police in West Bengal and she was kept under police custody. While staying under police custody the Bangladeshi kidnappers came and threatened her. Finally she was shifted to the NGO run rehabilitation center. Now she is in Bangladesh and Ain O Shalish Kendra has taken up her case.*

### **3.3 Loss of Land:**

In a country like Bangladesh, where land as a resource is of prime importance, landlessness and the landless is a major problem. Despite people trying to "hold on" to whatever amount of land one has, many are compelled to dispossess it for various reasons. Along with meeting medical treatment expenses or paying dowry for marriages, land loss to river erosion results in hundreds of households to be utter destitutes. Homeless and landless these are desperate people. A workplace with a semblance of shelter is all that they look for. Thousands throng the big cities within the country while tales of prospects on the other side of the border lure many to cross over to India.

*Omar Jan (CS,D-4) is now 35 and she came to India when she was about 23. She lost her parents when she was very young. She did not go to a school. She was brought up in her grandparents house and was married very young. The husband was a poor peasant with a little bit of land. After the birth of two children, the husband fell ill. They had to borrow money and sell all their land to meet the expenses of treatment. But despite all this, her husband died, leaving her in abject poverty. She started working as a maidservant in her husband's village. But all her earnings went into meeting the debts incurred during her husband's illness. There was a middleman in the village who told her about prospects of earnings in India. Now she works as a domestic help in eight houses in New Delhi.*

*Mohammad Bilayat (CS,D-11) is a boy of 16-17 today. He was born in a very poor family in Barisal and had five sisters and three brothers. The father was the only earning member of the family. The family had a little bit of land but all the land was lost to river erosion. Completely landless, the whole family moved to Khulna. Bilayat's father started working as a wage labour in the port area. To meet the expenses of marriage of the sisters, his father had to incur debts. Thus the family was in extreme difficult situation. They were advised by villagers to migrate to India. In fact, one of Bilayat's aunts had migrated to New Delhi with her family 15 years ago and the whole family was working there. Bilayat's father decided to try his luck and crossed the border with the help of a middlemen.*

*Abdul Sattar (CS,D-2), was living in the char area and did not own any agricultural land. He used to work as a farm labour and a day labour. The family had their homestead land. Few years ago Abdul Sattar lost his only piece of land to river erosion. The family was in deep trouble and decided to leave the country of origin. With the help of a middleman, Abdul Sattar along with his wife and five children took off for New Delhi.*

### **3.4 Supporting the Family:**

Gone are the days when the man's world comprised of a few adjoining villages along with his own, while the woman's activity was restricted within the four walls of the *bari*/homestead. Today women along with other family members, have been observed to migrate to India and elsewhere, for work and income and remit as much as they can to the remaining family members at home in their country of origin.

*Sohana (CS,D-8) belonged to a poor peasant family. Because of their poverty, the mother had migrated to India (New Delhi) in early 80's and used to send some money from time to time. Sohana was married but after the birth of her first child, the husband deserted her. With her child of one year, Sohana returned to her father's house. Seeing the poverty of her family, Sohana decided that she too would go to New Delhi, join her mother and help her father's family in Bangladesh. Now both Sohana and her mother work as domestic-helps with relatively low-income families (those who themselves work as Darwans, Ayahs, Cooks, Domestic Help) and both send money to Sohana's father through the dalals who frequent India.*



### 3.5 Micro-credit Trap:

There is yet another category, which should be a matter of concern for those interested in micro-credit for women. In our sample, there is at least one case (CS,B-5) where the woman had borrowed money from three well-known micro-credit schemes. *Kohinoor, now 40+ years old, used to live in Jessore. She was married when young but was ill-treated by the husband who was already married and divorced. Kohinoor went back to her parent's family with one child. The husband took her back after some time but again started physically beating her. In the meantime, another child was born to Kohinoor. She again returned to her parent's house with her two daughters and lodged a case against her husband. But then the husband's family members came, "wrote" some land in Kohinoor's "name" and persuaded her to go back to her husband. Soon another child was born, a son. The husband again started ill-treating her and forced her to return the land, given earlier to her. This time she left the daughters behind and came back to her parent's house with her son.*

*Desperate to earn some money, Kohinoor became a member of a micro-credit program offered by BRAC for buying cattle. After some time, she joined two other micro-credit programs under local NGOs. She took loans for poultry and for leasing in land. She was doing well and was also able to buy some land. Her credit worthiness was rated high. Kohinoor could take a loan of Taka 10,000/- at a time from BRAC an indication that she was prompt in her repayment. During this time, she entered into a business deal with a person who was married to a girl from her village. The man persuaded her to take a loan of Taka 10,000/- from BRAC and another NGO (RRC Samity/Islamic Samity). The money was handed over to the man in good faith. But soon the man fled away with the money.*

*For a loan of Taka 10,000, Kohinoor had to pay Taka 800/- per month as repayment. She could pay for only two months, which she did by selling off her land and cattle. Unable to repay the loan and meet her debt obligations any further, and afraid of the probable consequences, she decided to enter India with her son, leaving her country behind. She virtually fled away from Bangladesh. Today Kohinoor works in Mumbai as a domestic help. She regularly sends money to Bangladesh from her earnings in India in order to clear her debts (loan and interests) incurred with BRAC and other local NGOs.*

### 3.6 India as a Gateway to Greener Pastures:

According to some respondents, India is a stepping stone to realise all future dreams. They treat India as the first lap of their aspirations for going further. It has been revealed that some aspiring to go to Pakistan and the Gulf countries feel, it is easier and less expensive for them to try from places like New Delhi or Mumbai instead of from Bangladesh itself. In our sample, there are two men in Mumbai whose wives were able to get five-year contracts as domestic workers in Saudi Arabia through agents and organisations in New Delhi and Mumbai specialising in this business. According to Noorjahan (CS,D-6) of New Delhi, agents approached them with job offers and the rate for going to Pakistan was as low as Rs.600/.

For Gulf countries and Malaysia, the rates are Rs.10,000/- for women and Rs.30,000/- for men. There are thus some people who come to India to earn and save enough money so that one-day they may be able to go further.

The countries/cities where most respondents aspire to go to are Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Riyad, Italy and Malaysia. Greece is a new addition in the list of countries and the rates for Greece vary from Rs.80,000-100,000. Going to Pakistan is not a problem at all. One only needs a passport and a visa, which is available in New Delhi for only Rs.600/-

### 3.7 In Search of Dreams:

For many, the dream of making it good in India does not die easily. Take the case of Khadija (CS,B-8). *She and her husband had reached Mumbai just the day before the interview for this study. This was their second visit to Mumbai in eight years. Eight years ago, when they had come for the first time, they were able to stay for 7-8 months before they were arrested and 'pushed back' to Bangladesh. Back in Bangladesh, they tried to make a new life by starting a shrimp farm but due to local rivalry the water of the farm was poisoned and the shrimps perished. The couple took loan again to start afresh. This time the entire crop was washed away by the floods.*

*After the second disaster they found it impossible to continue with their investments at home any further and decided to take a chance again, but outside Bangladesh, and were successful in reaching Mumbai. The interview took place on the second day of their arrival in*

*Mumbai. Khadija had already started working as a daily labourer at the fish market (peeling shrimps). Her husband was still looking for a job. They did not have any shelter yet. They had spent the first night on the pavement spreading newspapers. But she was optimistic. With the first day's earnings (Rs.40/-) in hand she was planning to buy a stove and cooking pan. She has already started looking for a job as domestic help. Also, she had heard from a reliable source that a room in another slum would be vacant soon and may be they could rent it.*

### **Summary: Reasons for Leaving**

- For a majority of the men and women, the main reasons influencing their migration or falling prey to trafficking is economic. Because of poverty and low prospects of employment in their country of origin, both men and also women venture out to what they feel would be a better life with opportunities on the other side of the border. However, the economic compulsion is compounded by other factors.
- The overriding importance of the economic factor is, in all probability, due to the general background of lack of literacy in a large-scale among women and low level education among men. A large section of the respondents, both men and women also come from families, which do not own any resources in the form of agricultural land or have very little land.
- For married women desertion, divorce or husbands second marriage plays an important role in pushing the woman to look for independent living within or outside the country. It is then that she becomes easy target for the traffickers.
- For unmarried women, a major factor is marriage and the prevailing dowry system. Because of the high dowry demand in Bangladesh, many parents find it extremely difficult to marry off their daughters. On the other hand, there is social pressure on the family to marry the daughters off at a certain age. Desperate parents or the girls themselves fall prey to promises of marriage which later turn out to be fake/hollow. The girls are brought to India and sold.
- All girls who have been deceived into leaving home by persons known/unknown to them have been sold to brothels. Woman/girls abducted/kidnapped also end up in brothels

- One common thread running through almost all the episodes is that those who migrated or fell prey to trafficking had heard of prospects on the other side of the border from fellow villagers, friends, relations or other acquaintances. Most often these are the people who helped them cross the border.

## Prior Information and Sources of Information

### 4.1 Importance of Prior Knowledge:

For women as well as men, venturing out into the unknown usually means, as seen earlier, deception and desperation. It also calls for courage and an adventurous nature on the part of the person concerned. However, looking into various aspects of the respondents in our study, one interesting influencing factor of coming to India may be noticed. This factor is the provision of prior information by sources who often are the actors facilitating the whole operation of trafficking and/or illegal migration.

Evidently, the respondents before coming to India were in contact with people who had either come to India (or elsewhere) before, who gave false promises or who gave out information regarding work prospects at the receiving end and most importantly, who knew the agents/*dalals* dealing with trafficking and illegal movement.

For trafficking and/or illegal migration to take place, one of the pre-condition apparently is that the person concerned gets some information about the destination. The source of information can be many. But, to persuade a person to leave his or her country s/he normally has to be told about the place where she would be taken and the prospects which await them there. The information given, in the case of trafficking, may or may not be correct. In fact, it would be seen from the case studies cited in this report that deceit or providing wrong information is more true in the case of women than for men. Also, wrong information is provided more in the case of those women who ultimately are sold for the flesh trade. There were three cases of kidnapping – for them prior knowledge was out of question.

**Table 12** gives a distribution of respondents by the source of information that helped them in their decision to leave the country. Of the 51 women and 14 men, a large proportion (19 women and 9 men) mentioned fellow villagers as their source of information. Eight women (but no man) mentioned *dalals* (middlemen) as their source of information. For 9 women and 2 men, close relatives including parents were the source of information. The following paragraphs deal with some typical examples of the sources of information.

<b>Table: 12                      Distribution of Respondents by Source of Information</b>										
<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%age	Men	%
Villager	8	3	5	2	6	4	19	37.3	9	64.3
Dalal	4	-	3	-	1	-	8	15.7	-	
Lover	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	9.8	-	
Husband/ Ex-husband	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	5.9	-	
Close relatives/ Own family	5	1	3	1	1	2	9	17.6	2	14.3
Friends	3	-	-	1	-	-	3	5.9	-	
Others (Kidnapped, self)	2	-	2	-	-	1	4	7.8	3	21.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

## 4.2 Sources of Information:

### 4.2.1 Fellow Villagers

As a category of source of information, fellow villagers actually constitute the largest segment. They act as a source of information both for men and women. In some cases fellow villagers also play the role of middlemen/women -- *dalals*.

Take the case of Hamida (CS,B-4). *When her father died, Hamida had only a sister and the mother. They survived depending on the small amount of land that their father had left them. But soon to meet the cost of medical treatment of their mother, the land had to be parted with. After the mother died, the two sisters were living in the village in very poor conditions. A village woman who used to work in Mumbai, promised good work in Mumbai for them, but ultimately they were deceived the who had promised work and compelled to join the sex trade.*

*Nasima (CS, K-11) was deserted by her husband the first time, because her family could not meet his dowry demands of cash money. When the demand was met another problem cropped up. Nasima was unable to bear a child. According to doctors, her problem could be cured. But the husband was not interested and divorced her. She had to return to her mother and two brothers who ran the family. Nasima was clearly unwanted in her brother's house and she availed the opportunity of making an independent living. She was informed by a village girl about prospects of earning as a sex worker in Kolkata and she accepted the proposal.*

Villagers act as a source of information for men as well. *Take the case of Md. Billayat (CS, D-11). Billayat's family lost their land due to river erosion. Then to meet the dowry demands for four sisters, Billayat's family became indebted heavily. Some villagers informed and advised his father to go to India for work. Billayat, his mother and his brothers and sisters accompanied his father to India for work.*

Fellow villagers were the primary source of information also for Bidhan Saha (CS, K-20). *Bidhan and his brother fell out with their other brothers over business interest and were informed by villagers about prospects in India.*

#### **4.2.2 Dalals/Middlemen:**

*Dalals* or middlemen play an important role as a source of information to people who want to migrate to India. This is particularly true for those women who ultimately join the sex trade. These *dalals* may be broadly categorised into two types.

##### **i. Those Resorting to Deception:**

There is one type of middlemen who lure women with prospects of better earnings in India and without telling them the truth sell them off to brothel owners or to others in the same network.

Take for example the case of Farida Khatoon (CS, K-1). *Farida and her mother did not belong to a particularly poor family- needs were there but life was comfortable. She had studied upto class seven. Both Farida and her mother were skilled in quilt embroidery work (nakshi kantha). They were provided with work by a trader who used to collect orders from outside and got the work done by Farida and her mother. The man lured both Farida and her mother with similar work in Kolkata with prospects of better earnings than in Bangladesh. Ultimately he was able to persuade Farida's parents to let Farida go. The trader sold Farida to a brothel and now she works as a sex worker in Kolkata.*

*Reshma Gazi (CS, K-13) was another victim who was given false promises by a middleman. Belonging to an extremely poor family, she was married at the age of three in the next village. When she was 12, she went to live with her husband, who was also very poor. Ill-*

*treated by her in-laws, Reshma left her husband's home and took shelter in her maternal aunt's house in an adjoining village. She was promised work in Mumbai with prospects of good earnings by Selim, who lived in the same village where her aunt lived. Ultimately she landed up in the red-light area of Mumbai where she was sold.*

*Kanak Majumdar (CS,K-17) of Faridpur did not belong to a particularly poor family. Yet her father wanted to marry her off at the age of 16 to a much older man, who was already married. Reluctant to marry the person, Kanak and her mother decided that she would go away to her sister's house in Dum Dum near Kolkata in India. Her mother contacted a local professional trafficking agent and paid him money for taking Kanak to her sister. The agent took her to U.P. instead and sold her off to an old man as his bride for Rs.10,000.00. Today she is in Kolkata working as a peer educator and a part time sex worker.*

## **ii. Those Providing Correct Information:**

In some cases, women are provided with correct information by middlemen about prospects that await them at the destination. In many cases, the prospect of joining the flesh trade is even stated. But the situation of some women is so 'desperate', that they are not in a position to refuse. For women- deserted/divorced, having no money/resources, no education or skill background, when compelled to make an independent living, the options are very limited. Sex trade to many may seem to be the only easy way out. Moreover, this may have been the 'only choice' given to her, for evidently, behind such a trade there is an organised network of beneficiaries on both sides of the border. There are still others, who have been victims of incest in the family or experienced a breach of trust. The fear of being stigmatised and a low self-esteem has pushed these girls to opt for a profession easily available away from home.

*One such example is Nazma (CS,K-4). She was deserted by her husband after 15 years of marriage. She had a child to take care of. She returned to her parent's house. Soon she realized that she was not welcome there. She was approached by Ismat, a farmer and a middleman belonging to the same village with prospects of good earnings if she agreed to work as a sex worker. Nazma was in no position to turn down the proposal. She even spoke to her mother about it, who readily agreed. The immediate middleman, Ismat, handed her over to another person and Nazma's long journey started. She landed in a brothel at*



*Kolkata, after having been raped by BDR and BSF, border personnel of both Bangladesh and India four times.*

The case of Puja (CS,K-30) is an example of deception, force and ultimately, voluntary acceptance of the trade in sex by a hapless women. *Puja belonged to a village in Nepal. She fell in the clutches of a village youth who took her to Singapore, got her videoed naked and forced her to prostitution for two weeks. The money earned was kept by the village youth. After returning home, she found that she was pregnant. Then she was informed by the same youth and another village girl who was Puja's friend that they could earn money in Kolkata by selling their body. Puja and her friend Anjali (CS, K-31) agreed.*

Case Study K-7 illustrates the story of Shahida (CS,K-7). *Shahida when young, was sexually abused repeatedly by her own maternal-uncle. Gradually she started providing sexual favours to some village youths for money. By the age of 15 she felt that she had become a sex worker and there was no turning back. It was her own maternal uncle who informed her about the 'red light' area of Kolkata where she could earn more.*

#### **4.2.3 Lover/Paramour:**

"Lover boy" is a distinct category as a source of information, for women. (Case studies K-2, K-5, K-6, K-8, K-9 and K-32). Basically the lover boys trace girls and taking advantage of their gullibility or vulnerability, develops a physical relationship. After some time, they either sell off the girls or push them into a situation where the girls do not want to stay in the village but want to go far away to India for what they think would be a better living, socially. In three of the five cases, the lover boy belonged to the country of origin of the girl's (Bangladesh). But at least in two cases, the boys belonged to India and were close relatives of the victim girls who hailed from Bangladesh.

*Rabeya Khatoon (CS,K-5) comes from a well-off family. She was not good in her studies and she discontinued school. She had a sexual urge and she had physical relationship with her cousin and other boys in the village. An Indian man, Muktar, used to come to her neighbour's house. They fell in love and she had a steady relationship with him for 2 years. He proposed to her but her family did not want her to get married to him as he would take her away to India after marriage. But as she was madly in love with him the two decided to*

*run away from home to India. They did as they planned but right after arrival, Muktar sold her to a brothel in Kolkata.*

*Take the case of Tara (CS,K-32). She used to live with her mother, a brother and his wife and used to work in a Hairdressing shop in a small town in Nepal. Here she met Mohan, a boy who used to work in a shop in the same market. They fell in love and he wanted to marry her. She accepted his proposal but Tara's family did not want her to marry him. They decided to run away to India. She left her home without letting anyone know. Mohan took her to Bihar by bus and stayed in a Hotel. After 2 days he left her there and in the evening she came to know that she had been sold for Rs. 5000/-. She was raped by the person who bought her. Tara was later resold to a brothel in Kolkata.*

#### **4.2.4 Husband/Ex-husband:**

A distinct category of informants may be husbands or former husbands. We have three such cases of women who came to Kolkata. All three had to join the sex trade. (Case Studies K-3, K-12 and K-16).

In all the three cases, the husbands/ex-husbands informed the girls about India and on one pretext or another brought them there. After bringing them to Kolkata, all the three were sold in red light areas of the city. The following cases will give us the picture.

*Rukshana (CS, K-3) used to live with her mother, sisters and a physically disabled brother and used to work on their agricultural land. She and her mother were the main bread-winners of the family. She was in love with Hasan who came from a rich family in the village. They got married but it was not a happy one as the in-laws did not accept her and they were divorced after a year of the marriage. After few months Hasan met her and asked her to forget what had happened in the past and to start a new life some where else. She agreed immediately as she was carrying Hasan's child and left home with out telling any one at home.*

*From their village in Bikrampur the two along with some of Hasan's friends drove down to the border area. They paid a dalal and crossed over to Bonga and took the bus to Kalighat in*

*Kolkata. Here her ex-husband sold her to a 'Madam' for Rs. 4000 and thus she started working as a sex-worker.*

*Yet another case is of Archana (CS, K-16) who fled to India from Khulna, a bordering district, with her husband and children after the family was accused of kidnapping a girl in their village. The way to India was known to her husband as he used to visit Kolkata quite often. They put up with a friend of her husband who helped them to find a job also. Archana's husband did not like his job and was irregular and they fell into debts. He told Archana that he would find a job for her and he would take care of the children. One day he took her to show a cinema and they landed up in a red light area in Kolkata. It was here that he asked her to work as a sex-worker. He made arrangements with the 'madam' that she would go to visit the family every week and she was told not to feel bad about it and that she should tell people that she was working in a clinic. She did not want to work at first and was beaten up and it was after quite some time that she started to work as a sex-worker. When the kidnapping case was withdrawn Archana along with her husband came back home to Bangladesh. But now she was looked down upon by her husband, which left her with no options but to leave home. Archana knew of no other alternative and was forced to return to her work place in India.*

#### **4.2.5 Close Relatives:**

Close relatives may act as a source of information both for women who become victims of the sex trade and of those who join other trades.

*Take the case of Amina (CS,B-15). Belonging to a very poor family in Rajshahi, Amina was brought to India for marriage at the age of 13 by her aunt who used to live in an adjoining village in India. The marriage did not work out and Amina was lured to the sex trade in Mumbai by a villager in Malda-the place where she was originally brought by her maternal aunt to be married off.*

*Rahima (CS,B-2) belonged to an extremely poor family and was deserted by her husband when she was 9 months pregnant. Her cousin sister, Mumtaz, who was also deserted by her husband and who had gone to Mumbai for work (being informed by fellow villagers) was Rahima's source of information. After Mumtaz came back from Mumbai she met Rahima and*

*told her about work prospects and took her there. Rahima now works as a domestic help in Mumbai.*

*After Vijay Gurung's (CS,D-15) father married the second time, he was finding it difficult to raise Vijay who was in his teens. He was told by his brother in law about prospects in India. The step uncle also informed Vijay's father that he would find a job of an apprentice in a garage in New Delhi for Vijay and it might cost him Rs. 12,000. Vijay's father paid Rs. 12,000 to his brother in law and Vijay left Nepal for India. After his arrival in New Delhi in India the step-uncle gave him a few hundred rupees and asked him to fend for himself. Now Vijay is at a home for destitute children.*

One pattern that is discernible is that in the case of men in general and in the case of those women who are working as domestic help, cheap labour, rag-pickers or small business owner, the informants were mostly fellow villagers who provided with correct information. In this study 28 women were engaged thus and of this total, 18 were provided with prior information by fellow villagers.

For those women who joined the sex trade (23/51), middlemen or *dalals* were the source of (correct/incorrect) information for as many as 4 respondents, followed by lovers (5), husbands/ex-husbands (3) other close relatives (3) and villagers. Incorrect information, deceit and the like, are mostly true for women, particularly for those who ultimately are forced or voluntarily later join the sex trade.

### **Summary: Sources of Information**

- Prior information of options and prospects in the country of destination is a precondition for trafficking and/or illegal migration.
- Fellow villagers constitute the largest category of informants. Some among them had prior information through friends frequenting India.
- The informants also include close relatives including parents, husbands or ex-husbands.
- There are professional middlemen/women or the *dalals* who provide with information.

- For gullible girls, lovers act as agents who ultimately sell them to brothels. The difference between women and men who came to India is that in many cases the women were deceived into believing that they were going for work or for a better living. They were not told about the ultimate fate awaiting them. This is particularly true of those women who joined the sex trade. On the other hand, in the case of men, there was no such trickery.
- There are cases where women victims in a desperate need to make a living were told that they would join the sex trade even before they left their own country. For want of alternative

## Crossing the Border

Whether it is illegal migration or trafficking, the actual experience of crossing the border varies from person to person. This section identifies the points of entry, discusses the facilitators and describes the process. In the hurdles encountered and overcome together with the routes taken to cross borders, it is evident that the process within an organised network is fraught with danger for the persons undertaking the journey. It also means having to spend money – the amount varying depending on the number of persons, purpose and place.

### 5.1 Points of Entry:

Evidently, there are certain points along the border between Bangladesh, Nepal and India, which are common points of entry. For those who come from Nepal, the main entry points are Siliguri (in Darjeeling district in West Bengal), Sitamari, Maddhubani and Kishangunj, all located in north Bihar.

For those who cross the border from Bangladesh, Gede-Banpur-Krishnagar or Benapole-Bongaon (Nadia district in West Bengal) are common entry points. From Meherpur, Tehata in Nadia district is a favourite entry point. Sharsha-Basirhat or Bhomra-Basirhat in north 24 Parganas in West Bengal is also popular. For those who cross the border from the southern parts of Bangladesh, (i.e., Barisal, Khulna, Sundarbans etc), the entry points are through Lakshikanatapur, Sonakhali and some other points of the Sundarbans in West Bengal.

In Northern West Bengal, the main entry points from Bangladesh are in Malda through Mahananda river and through the border area at Hili (Dinajpur district, Bangladesh) to erstwhile West Dinajpur in West Bengal. Some respondents hailing from Comilla district in Bangladesh crossed over to Tripura in India and from there went to New Delhi.

### 5.2 Facilitators:

In both trafficking and/or (illegal) migration, the actual process of crossing the border has to be facilitated by someone. The person who actually assists/helps in the process of crossing

the border is an important actor in the phenomena of trafficking/transporting people (*dhur*), and is being called a facilitator here.

In our sample, *dalal* or (professional) middlemen emerged as the largest single group of facilitators both for women and men (**Table 13**). The *dalal* may be a known person belonging to the same village as the person entering India. The *dalal* may also be unknown belonging to some other place. The facilitators organise the whole operation starting from the journey from home till crossing of the actual border -often accompanying the person till the final destination. The *dalals* in reality perform a two-way function. They also act as carriers of gifts/money of the trafficked/migrants from India to their relations in Bangladesh. People wanting to travel back from India to Bangladesh may also take their help.

It is these facilitators who are knowledgeable about the whole process and are in contacts with the other actors within the network. Invariably, most of the *dalals* were found to be men, the number of women operating as facilitators are few. Besides *dalals* the other facilitators have been close relatives, (ex)husbands, fellow villagers and lovers. As evident from the table the category of 'others/not stated' includes three women (2 in Kolkata and 1 in Mumbai) who were kidnapped and brought to India .It also includes 4 women who came on their own without the help of any facilitator.

Table: 13      Distribution of Respondents by Type of Facilitator										
Type	Kolkata		Mumbai		New Delhi		All			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men	%
<i>Dalals</i>	12	3	8	1	6	6	26	50.9	10	71.4
Close relatives	-	1	3	1	-	1	3	5.8	3	21.4
Husband/ Ex husband	3	-	1	-	-	-	4	7.8	-	
Villager	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	9.8	-	
Lover	5	-	-	-	-	-	5	9.8	-	
Others/ not stated	5	-	1	1	2	-	8	15.8	1	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

### 5.3 Crossing the Border Alone or in Groups:

Respondents crossing the border have traveled in groups or alone with only the facilitator. The groups too varied in the number of persons included (**Table 14**). We come across groups comprising more than 7 persons to a group where it is comprised of only one other person beside the facilitator. It is important to note however that majority of the

respondents (31%) have crossed the border alone accompanied by only the facilitator/*dala*. A group of 4-6 persons apparently is also common. People traveling in a group of 4-6 to 7 and more, are usually the ones who have traveled with families and fellow villagers on way to Mumbai or New Delhi.

<b>Table:14 Distribution of Respondents by Number of Persons who Came Together</b>										
<b>Number</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men	%
Alone + facilitator	15	-	1	1	-	2	16	31.4	3	21.4
Alone	3	2	3	1	1	-	7	13.7	3	21.4
2	4	1	1	1	1	-	6	11.7	2	14.4
3	3	-	1	-	1	1	5	9.8	1	7.1
4-6	2	1	3	-	4	3	9	17.7	4	28.6
7+	1	-	4	-	1	-	6	11.7	-	-
Not stated	2	-	-	-	-	1	2	3.9	1	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

It is interesting to note, however, that of the 15 women in Kolkata who were not accompanied by any one other than the facilitator, as many as 12 (80%) became sex workers. Apart from them, there are 7 others in Kolkata who also became sex-workers and of these 7, one was kidnapped and brought to Kolkata while the rest came accompanied by 1-2 persons.

For men the situation is somewhat different. Most men had come with their family and relatives.

When a person, man or woman, first ventures out it is natural to take the help of others in order to contact facilitators, make all necessary arrangements and then travel often in groups. For those who have undertaken the journey of crossing the border more than once, the second time the mode of operation changes. Having gone through the experience once and therefore gaining confidence, now they may not need a facilitator nor need to travel in groups. The following case is interesting for here we observe a woman whose process of crossing undergoes change- a reflection of time and experience.

*Rahima (CS,B-2) used to live with her brothers in Bangladesh. The brothers did not have any land of their own. Rahima had never been to a school. She was married for the first time when she was only 11 years old. Even before her first child, a daughter, was born, her husband deserted her. Rahima then started working in a rice mill, for a daily wage of Taka 20-30. Because of her poverty, she was finding her situation to be difficult. Around this time*



*she met a cousin sister who had migrated to Mumbai earlier. She took pity on Rahima and persuaded her to come to Mumbai. Rahima did not have any money of her own. She sold off whatever she had and got Taka 300/-. With this money, she crossed the border with her cousin sister and somehow came to Mumbai.*

*Rahima started working in Mumbai as a domestic help and saved some money. After 6 months, both Rahima and her cousin returned to Bangladesh with their savings. Rahima's husband got news of her return and also that she had some money. He came back to Rahima. But after two years, left her again. Again with all her savings gone, Rahima decided to return to Mumbai. This time she needed no help from others to show her the way to India. She herself contacted the middleman and crossed the border. Now she is settled in Mumbai, and has remarried a person named Amin from Jessore in Bangladesh.*

#### **5.4 The Process of Crossing the Border:**

The process of crossing the border brings to focus an order, which although shrouded in mystery is in all reality 'open' to those who would care to know. However, it may also be noted that the people within the network have a way of knowing who to tell and whom not to; who is 'safe' and who is not.

The entire operation involving the process of crossing the border is clandestine by nature. There are people who use the official check posts by bribing the officials manning them and there are many others who discover their own routes and/or use other entry points as suggested by the *dalals*/ facilitator. The following pages describe the usual mode of crossing the borders with the help of *dalals* and others, reveals the situation after crossing and also notes the sexual abuse that women are often subjected to on their way to India.

##### **5.4.1 *Dalals*, Border Forces and Bribe: The Main Pattern**

The usual mode of crossing the border is to come to a certain point at the border with the help of a *dawal*. The *dalals* collect money the amount varying from Taka 250-3000 per head. The amount depends on the ability to pay and number of members of a family wanting to cross the border. There is no charge for children upto the age of 5 years.

If it is an official border-crossing check-post, then the *dala* pays bribe to the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel as well as to Border Security Force (BSF) on the other side in India. The rates may vary from area to area and from person to person. In our sample, the amount paid to BDR ranged between Taka 50-2000 per person. Besides the money changing hands, the woman often has to pay a bigger price. Cases have been discovered where the women were raped on both sides of the border – by BDR and then again by BSF personnel.

The ease or difficulty with which one may cross the border by bribing the authorities may vary with time and location. Case Study B-8 provides an example. *Khadija, her husband and their 4 years old son came to the border area near Bongaon in West Bengal. They could not cross the border because that particular day there was heavy security and checking. They spent time in the dalals house near the border in Bangladesh. When it was quite dark, they came to the border and the dalal paid money to the BDR and BSF people who let them pass without any further hitch.*

#### **5.4.2 Crossing on one's own:**

There are some who are able to cross the border all by themselves without any problem in areas where there is slack or no security personnel guarding the border. For example, *Suriaya Begum with her family (CS,D-7) was able to come to the border area in Jessore from her village located also in Jessore by asking the local people. Then they were able to sneak into India without any trouble whatsoever.*

#### **5.4.3 Crossing through 'ghat's'**

But there are options other than official check-posts also. It is also possible that instead of a single *dala*, people may have to take the help of a number of *dalals*, each helping them in some way in crossing the border. Normally, both in Bangladesh and in West Bengal, the term '*ghat*' is used to describe that part of a pond or river bank where people take their bath or take a boat. In the context of illegal migration and trafficking, the term '*ghat*' does have other connotations. For example, there are points in the vast border between the two countries that are not official check-posts. There need not even be rivers. But the point may be used for border crossing in an organised manner. A local don or a leader or a '*matbar*' has to be paid money for the favour of crossing the border from his area. This man is

universally described as '*ghat malik*' (owner of a '*ghat*') by those involved in border crossing. There is another '*ghat malik*' on the other (Indian) side of the border. Both the '*ghat maliks*' have to be paid for the favour of crossing the border.

The Case Study of Rahima (CS, K-15) illustrates the involvement of multi-dalals and '*ghat malik*' in the operation of border crossing. *Rahima, her two sons (10 and 5 years old) and her 4 month old daughter took a baby taxi and paid Taka 7 for the ride from Daulatpur in Khulna to Sonadanga also in Khulna. There she took a bus to Bhomra border area in Satkhira. She had to pay Taka 35/- for herself and Taka 18/- for her elder son.*

*In Bhomra they paid money (Taka 20/-) to the first dalal just for showing the way to the border. Then they paid Taka 10/- to the second dalal also to show the way, and Taka 70/- to the last (in Bangladesh side) dalal who brought her near the actual border. There the '*ghat malik*' was paid Taka 12/- who let them cross a small stream on a boat. The '*ghat malik*' changed her Bangladeshi currency into Indian rupees. On the way she was pestered for money by several people but somehow managed to come away without paying them anything.*

*After reaching the Indian side, she had to pay Rs.200/- to someone who showed her the way for taking a rickshaw van. She walked for 5/6 kilometers and reached the spot where vans were waiting. There she had to pay Rs.10/- per head for herself and her two sons. While she was taking the van ride, the van was stopped by the local people and she had to pay Rs.25/- to them. Rahima reached a place where she had to take a short boat ride. The boats were motorised. For Rs.2/- per head, they were allowed to travel in the boat, but were made to sit inside under the planks. After reaching the destination, the local police had to be paid Rs.10/-. Then she had to take another van ride. Now she had to pay Rs.15/- per head for herself and her two sons. Finally they reached Basirhat railway station in West Bengal. From there she had to buy tickets for Barasat (Rs.18/-) and from there to Sealdah in Kolkata (Rs.12/-). In all therefore, Rahima had spent Taka 172 in Bangladesh and Rs. 346 after crossing the border in India that involved a number of dalals and different modes of transport.*

#### **5.4.4 The Riverine Routes: *Boat People***

Some come all the way by boat, particularly those who enter the southern riverine parts of West Bengal. For example *Zinnat (CS,K-24)* , *her husband and her small baby came all the way in a boat from Barisal. It was a small fishing boat carrying a number of people who were cramped together for lack of space. They had to spend 8 days in miserable conditions – there was hardly any food or water let alone a place to sit. They reached Sonakhali in South 24 Pargana in India. Zinnat does not know how much money was paid and to whom, as her husband handled that part.*

#### **5.4.5 Fake Papers:**

There are some who travel with forged passports known locally as '*galakata passport*'. Rukhia (CS, D-1) is a case in point. She paid the *dala/* Taka 2000/- who got her not only a passport but also had a visa for India, stamped on it. With this 'passport', Rukhia easily crossed the border. She had to present/show this passport at three points along her walking route.

#### **5.4.6 No Papers:**

For the Nepalese, the usual practice is to come to India by bus without any problems as there is no travel document required.

### **5.5 After Crossing the Border:**

After crossing the border, the experience varies again from person to person. The different experiences have been summarised as follows;

- ✓ For some respondents, it was a straight forward journey to the place of their choice, i.e., Kolkata, New Delhi or Mumbai by local transports. Some also walked for miles to reach their destinations (Kolkata from the point of crossing the border in Bangladesh).
- ✓ The usual pattern observed for those women involved in the brothels at present is they were brought to the city and then sold to brothel owners or other middlemen. Some

were raped by the people who brought them to India on false pretexts before they were finally sold (CS,K-9).

- ✓ For those who traveled to Mumbai or New Delhi, the experience was of various types. For example, *Akbar (CS,D-9) and his family wanted to go to Mumbai after reaching Kolkata. They walked all the way to Kolkata from the point of crossing the border from Jessore and managed to reach the Howrah railway station. They boarded a train for Mumbai without buying any ticket, which they could not afford. Nor did they have any money to buy food. They begged for their food. They were detected by a ticket checker who took pity on them but made them get off the train at the next station. Here also they begged for their food and took the next train. This way, they reached Mumbai in seven days, a journey that normally takes two days. Akbar, who was only about 10 years old then, still remembers the hunger, begging, strange railway stations and the long journey.*

- ✓ For Rahima (CS,B-2), her three children and a cousin sister, the experience was somewhat better. After crossing the border by boat somewhere near north 24 Parganas in West Bengal, they walked for the whole day to reach the nearest railway station. On their way, they were jeered at by young boys :

*"Bangladesher loke  
Alo chaler khud khey  
Camp er modhhey dhoke"*

Meaning 'the (poor) folks from Bangladesh, eat broken rice and enter (Refugee) camps'. This was a hint at their poverty in Bangladesh.

From there they took a train to Kolkata and a bus ride took them to the Howrah station. They were going to Mumbai and could buy only one ticket. With it all of them boarded the train. They did not have any money to buy food on the way. Some policemen who were travelling on the train noticed this. They were kind enough to buy some food for them on the way.

- ✓ *Dalals* who helped cross the border often have evidently helped the respondents to reach Howrah railway station, Kolkata.

## 5.6 Crossing the Border and Sexual Abuse:

For most people, women or men, the experience of crossing the border is not a pleasant one. The entire process gives rise to severe tension in the minds of those attempting to cross borders, which they knowingly do illegally. The people who cross over, usually do so because many of them are in desperate situations and believe that their problems would be solved once they reach India. For the majority however making the move is to avail better earning opportunities. But for both these groups, at every possible point there is uncertainty and they have to part with money. Some women, as we have seen, have to pay a heavier price. They are the ones who with the help of facilitators travel mostly alone and who interestingly are made to use the official points of entry and endure sexual abuse in the hands of the law enforcing agencies. In our sample, there are three women who were raped by the BDR/BSF people on both sides of the border.

- *Nazma (CS,K-1) was abandoned by her husband and she was not welcomed at her paternal home. She was looking for jobs but could not find jobs in the village. A fellow villager offered her a job to work as a sex-worker in Kolkata. She agreed to come to a brothel in Kolkata in desperate search for a means of living. She came into contact with a number of dalals who helped her in crossing the border. They did so because they all would get a share from the money that would come from selling her at a brothel for Rs.5000/-*

*She paid Taka 220/- to the first dalal (who was the informant) called Ismat. Ismat handed her over to another dalal called Rafique. Rafique warned her that the money paid to Ismat was not enough as a lot of money would have to be paid at different points. Rafique brought her at the Gede border check-post area. Rafique clearly told her that she would have to 'satisfy' people at the border as her price for entering India. Rafique then handed her over to someone called 'Khalekh uncle' who was a BDR personnel. Khalekh introduced her to another person called Mintu and told her that she would have to go across as the 'wife' of Mintu. Mintu took her to a room where two BDR men were waiting. The two men raped her. After that a third BDR man came and raped her again. She and Mintu were then asked to wait till nightfall in that room. After dusk, the BDR men handed them over to BSF people. She was taken to a room where two BSF*

*men raped her again. In the morning she and Mintu took a van, came to the railway station and took the Kolkata bound train.*

- *Bilkis (CS,K-6), deserted by husband and without a place to call it her home, was befriended by a boatman who promised to marry her and take her to Kolkata. At the crossing point, they had to pay Taka 200/- per head to BDR people. But the BDR person raped her before letting them enter India. On the Indian side, she was raped by two BSF persons. All this happened in the very presence of her boatman 'boyfriend' who had promised to marry her but actually sold her to a brothel later.*

### **Summary: Crossing the Border**

- In the case of entry from Nepal, the matter is simple. As no travel documents are required people can take a bus ride directly from Nepal to enter India. They mainly enter from Bihar or from the Darjeeling point in the North.
- In the case of those entering West Bengal from Bangladesh, following are the main entry points of traffickers and illegal migrants along the Indo- Bangladesh border.
  - Nadia district of West Bengal is probably the most favourite district of entry. The names of Bongaon in West Bengal and Benapole in Bangladesh is largely known and many people intending to enter, come to this location. Another favourite point in Nadia is Gede-Banpur/Krishnagar. From both these points, a train takes just around two hours to reach Sealdah station in Kolkata.
  - In north 24 Parganas district in West Bengal, which is even nearer to Kolkata than Nadia, the popular entry points from Bangladesh are Sharsha-Basirhat or Bhomra-Basirhat.
  - For those who cross the border into West Bengal from the southern side, the entry points are mainly by river and people come to Lakshikantapur, Sonakhali or other parts of the Sundarbans.

- In the northern parts of West Bengal, Hili in Dakshin Dinajpur district is the most common point of entry. Some people also use the Mahananda River to enter Siliguri in Darjeeling district of West Bengal.
  - Some also cross over to Bihar or Tripura and then choose their destinations in India.
- The actual process of crossing the border has to be generally facilitated by someone. That is, someone who knows the 'ropes' has to accompany the person across the border. Both for men and women (commonly known as *dhur*), *dala* or middlemen were found to be the main facilitators. In some cases, there may be multiple *dalals*, i.e., more than one person who helps for monetary considerations. The *dalals* perform a two way function – they bring back news/money/gifts for relatives' back home.
  - There are a few who are able to cross the border through unguarded points without any external help. However, the usual mode of entry is with the help of middlemen or *dalals* who know the border areas, have links with the security personnel on both the sides and generally have some pre-agreed arrangement for payment of bribes.
  - Unofficial and unguarded points of entry are often locally called '*ghats*'. The local leader or '*matbar*' is called the '*ghat malik*' or owner of the '*ghat*'. He has to be bribed for the favour of crossing the border from his area. Similarly, there are counterparts on the other side of the border in West Bengal - also called '*ghat maliks*'.
  - Some people cross the border in boats. It may take even 7-8 days of uncomfortable travel in small fishing boats to reach West Bengal.
  - It is apparent from the case studies that so far as Bangladesh border is concerned, both Bangladesh authorities (BDR) and Indian authorities (BSF) are thoroughly corrupt and have regular and close linkages with middlemen. Even in the absence of middlemen, they are used to accept money from people and allow them to cross the border.



- The *dalals* who help to cross have to be paid money, the amount varying from Taka 250-3000 per head, depending on the ability to pay and the number of persons in a family wanting to cross. Money also changes hands between the *dalals* and the border law enforcing agencies-ranging between Taka 50- 2000 per person.
- Some women who land up in brothels do not have to pay any money at the time of crossing the border with their facilitators. It is the facilitator/middleman/*dala*/ who bribes those who help in the crossing, including BDR and BSF, for it is the facilitator who would benefit more after the sale of the woman.
- Women, who ultimately end up in brothels mostly have traveled alone, accompanied only by the facilitator. In the case of men, the usual pattern is to travel with their family and relatives.
- There are instances of rape by BDR-BSF personnel of women who were being taken by their facilitators. From the narration, it seems that the facilitators know all about it beforehand and this is a normal practice. Thus, BDR/BSF people have a way of identifying women who are specially vulnerable and enabling them to take sexual advantage of their situation.
- After crossing the border, people generally come to Kolkata on their own or with the help of middlemen/*dalals*. For those women who are deceived and sold to brothel owners, it is mostly the *dalals* who bring them to the city and trick them into prostitution. Some are even raped by those who sell them, before they are actually sold.
- Those who want to travel to Mumbai or New Delhi come to the Howrah railway station and take trains to their destinations. Those who do not have money to buy tickets may be thrown out at the next station after detection. Undaunted, they take the next train and manage to reach the city of their choice.
- For those who come from Nepal, as no travel documents are necessary, movement is practically free. It does not entail the hardships that people from Bangladesh experience and endure.

## Starting Life Anew

Except three women who were physically kidnapped and brought into India, all others came voluntarily to India to start a new life. It is another matter that many women were victims of deception and were brought to India for a life, which was not to their own choice. Still others had come with expectations that turned out to be different. However, leaving behind one's own country and roots, all familiar faces and places and striving to make a new life in an unfamiliar environment in another country is not an easy task.

For the respondents, apart from getting engaged in remunerative activities there had to be a search for accommodation, overcome problems of language, get to know ones surroundings/way, enroll the children in school – activities all aimed for (a gradual) assimilation with the mainstream. The process of assimilation is difficult and long drawn. Time is an important factor in terms of adaptation and blending. When asked how long the respondents had been living in India, most, presumably to assert their rights for residents status, have stated a time span of 10-15 years. But the language they communicated in and the observed way of life did not help in confirming their statements.

In this section, we attempt to highlight the process of assimilation process through the respondent's search for accommodation, learning the language, acquiring identification documents/passports and/or getting affiliated with local political parties. The occupations of respondents-a pre condition of their staying on in the country of destination have been dealt with in more detail.

### **6.1 The Process of Assimilation:**

#### ***6.1.1 Accommodation:***

As soon as the trafficked/migrant people reach their destination the first look out is for a place to stay. Most often the persons who accompany them let them stay under their care at least for a few days. Respondents have also stayed with people known to them from before/people of the same village or with relatives (if any) till such time they could get their

independent accommodation nearby. Staying on the footpath by spreading newspapers has also been observed. The search for a job begins immediately, rather simultaneously.

For those who were brought with the explicit intention of the sex trade, there was no search for accommodation or occupation; they were almost immediately handed over to the brothel owners who in turn wasted no time in making them, mostly forcing them to take to the trade.

### ***6.1.2 Learning the Language/Adopting Local Dress Code/Enrollment in Schools:***

To get a job and to communicate with the locals, on the job or elsewhere, respondents required to learn the language (Hindi), especially in Mumbai and New Delhi. In Kolkata the problem of language was not to the same extent. But here, for those involved in the sex trade conscious effort was needed in the use of certain words (*jal* instead of *pani*, *bhogoban* and not *allah*, etc.) in their daily parlance. Muslim names had also to be changed. In Mumbai and New Delhi language proved to be the greatest barrier for all, in merging with the locals.

Apart from learning the language all women in New Delhi were found to have discarded their *saris* and changed over to *shalwar kameez* –this too is an attempt at assimilation observed also in Mumbai but not in the same scale. Such a scheme was not necessary in Kolkata

Evidently most of the children (girls and boys of migrants) have been enrolled in *Madrasahs* functioning within the slums. Some NGO run schools in New Delhi and Mumbai are being frequented by mostly the boys. The main reason for this discrimination is the 'Hindi' medium of instructions in these schools. The parents aspire to get the girls married in Bangladesh and want them to be fluent in 'Bangla' by staying home. Moreover the girls helped with the household chores.

### ***6.1.3 Acquiring Identification Documents (ID):***

#### ***i. Ration Card:***

In the Indian context, the ration card is a document used for buying certain food grains and other commodities from the (subsidised) public distribution system. It is widely accepted as an identification document (ID). For many illegal migrants, getting a ration card through the

help of corrupt politicians and officials is thus a high priority. In our study we observe, 7/34 in Kolkata, 10/15 in New Delhi and 2/16 in Mumbai to have been able to procure ration cards.

*ii. Voters Identification:*

Another important ID that legitimises one's stay in India is getting one's name in the voter's list. Like ration cards, those who want to stay here also try for this. In our sample 2/34 in Kolkata, 09/15 in New Delhi and none in Mumbai has his or her name in the voter's list.

Of the 7 who have ration cards in Kolkata, 2 have also their names in the voter's list. In New Delhi, 9 have both IDs while only 1 each have ration card and voter card only. In Mumbai only 1 woman and 1 man admitted of having ration card only. **Table 15** presents the distribution of respondents by ownership of the two most important IDs.

Table: 15      Distribution of Respondents by Ownership of Ration Cards & Voter ID in India										
	Kolkata		Mumbai		New Delhi		All			
Document	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men	%
Only ration card	4	3	1	1	-	1	5	9.8	5	36.7
Only voter ID	-	-	-	-	-	1	-		1	7.1
Both	2		-	-	6	3	11	21.6	6	42.8
None/ NR	24	1	12	2	2	2	35	68.6	2	14.3
Total	30	4	13	3	8	7	51		14	

The information unfortunately could be collected from only 28 respondents. The others were either not asked the question or did not give any clear answer as it was apparent that they were not in favour of giving out such information. But those who did give out the answer have presented an interesting phenomenon. Out of 14 men in all the three cities, as many as 12 have at least one or both of these documents. While among 51 women in the three cities, most have not answered the question and only 16 admitted of having at least one or both documents. Evidently men are in a better position than the women as far as procuring these documents are concerned.

*iii. Bank Account:*

In Kolkata, 5/34 have bank accounts. In New Delhi the account holders number 2/15 and in Mumbai 1/16. Of these 8 who have bank accounts are 5 who also have ration cards/voter ID. Of these 8, however 5 are women and three are men.

*iv. (Indian) Passport:*

Only three have been able to procure the final document legitimising their stay – an Indian passport. Of them, two are women in New Delhi and one is a man in Mumbai.

*v. Participation in Elections:*

In Kolkata, 3 men and 5 women have participated in elections whereas in Mumbai only 1 woman and 1 man have been able to participate in elections. In New Delhi 5 women and 5 men have also participated in elections. (**Table A17**). Thus a total of 20 women and men in our sample, have cast their votes in elections in India despite not being listed as voters and having voter IDs.

## **6.2 Freedom of Movement:**

It was expected that illegal migrants/trafficked women would have restricted movements although they did have an advantage of not being easily identified due to similarity of looks and also language to an extent (in Kolkata). In places like New Delhi and Mumbai, as stated earlier, language restricted free movement, so did the insecurity of living (illegally) in a foreign land, harassment of the law enforcing agencies and the threat of being caught and 'pushed back'.

The respondents when asked about facing problems in moving about from one place to another resulted in mixed answers. About 77% women and 64% men felt they could move about freely. For those who felt otherwise, 4 men in New Delhi reported restricted movements as two of them lived in a rehabilitation home and the other two men were worried about police raids. In Kolkata, 8 women mentioned of experiencing problems. Of them, two young girls were inmates of a rescue home and obviously had restricted movement. The other six were young sex workers.

In Mumbai and New Delhi, three women were not comfortable in moving from one place to another. Of them one was a new comer. Two others (New Delhi) were nervous because of increased raids by the police.

By and large, there is no problem in movement in Kolkata except for the special circumstances of some sex workers or young girls in rescue homes. New Delhi is the only city where, at least a few feel uncomfortable because of the fear of authorities (*Table 16*).

<b>Table: 16 Free Movement within India</b>									
<b>Response</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men %
Yes	22	4	11	3	6	2	39	76.4	9 64.3
No	8	-	1	-	2	5	11	21.6	5 35.7
No Response	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	1.9	- -
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>

### 6.3 Access to Legal Services:

Access to lawyers or to organisations for legal services is important for those who are new in a society, particularly if they have a feeling of insecurity. In our sample as many as about 60 percent (39/65) women and men felt that they did have such access. But that still leaves 26 men and women who did not feel that they had this access.

Among those who felt that they did not have free access are 20 women and 6 men.

In Kolkata, none of the men but 11 women had problems to legal access. Of these 11 women, 4 are young sex workers. The rest (7) are mostly new comers or are floating living on the footpaths.

In Mumbai, such problems are limited. However, in New Delhi, there seems to be almost a total lack of support and access to any sort of legal services (*Table 17*).

<b>Table: 17 Access to Legal Services in India</b>									
<b>Response</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men %
Yes	19	4	11	2	1	2	31	60.8	8 57.1
No	11	-	2	1	7	5	20	39.2	6 42.8
No Response	-	-	-	-	-	-			
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>

### 6.4 Access to Health Services:

There is almost universal access to existing health services for the respondents (*Table 18*). 60/65 respondents felt they had access to health services like any one else. There is also a

preference for government health service. In fact, many pointed out that even when it is known that they are from Bangladesh, they do not face any problem in respect of health services

<b>Table: 18 Access to Health Facility in India</b>										
<b>Response</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men	%
Yes	28	4	11	3	7	7	46	90.2	14	100.0
No	2	-	2	-	1	-	5	9.8	-	-
No Response	-	-	-	-	-	-				
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

## 6.5 Occupations Pursued:

### Difference of Experience between Men and Women

Case studies give an insight into the present conditions of the respondents in terms of the occupations that they pursue. Since the jobs differ between men and women, we present the findings separately for men and women.

#### The Women:

For the women whom we have met, a fairly large segment are currently associated with the sex trade (45percent, 23/51). Of these 23, two has 'risen' to the position of a brothel owner and another two could manage to get jobs as peer educators for HIV-AIDS projects. Most of the sex workers contacted are based in Kolkata (19). After sex workers, the next important category, are those who are working as domestic workers (12). Among the domestic workers, 5 are based in Mumbai and 7 in New Delhi. Some did not get anything better and became ragpickers (3), some beg on the streets (2) while some are managing their own households (3). There is one who is a drug-peddler and another is a whole-seller in scrap metals and waste paper.

#### i. Sex Workers:

In our sample of 51 women, as many as 45% (23) have become sex workers. Of them 19 came to Kolkata and the rest (4) went to Mumbai. Most of these women were illiterates. Of the 19 who went to Kolkata 10 had no schooling and 5 had studied upto the primary level. Both sex workers in Mumbai were illiterates. Apparently of the total women respondents

about 51% had taken the help of *dalals* to enter India and interestingly of the 12 women in Kolkata who had come with *dalals* as high as 75% (9) landed up in brothels. In Mumbai 2 out of the 8 women who had come under the facilitation of *dalals*, had also joined the sex trade. Of the total 23 sex workers, 5 of them knew from before that they were coming to become sex workers. It is not that, that these women had decided to join the sex trade themselves, but this was a profession (may be the only profession) suggested by the facilitator and it was their circumstances, under which they were leaving home, that they accepted. For the rest of the total, it was deception and later coercion by people close to them viz., lovers, close relatives or people in whom they placed trust like (former) husbands for starting life anew in a new environment. Of the 3 women in Kolkata who came with their husbands/former husbands all were made to join the sex trade by these persons. Similarly, of the 5 in Kolkata who had come with their 'lovers' all were forced into prostitution. The story for them is usually the same. They were lured to accompany them to India and were ultimately sold to brothel owners. When they realize the horror of the situation, they have little options left. Some do try to resist initially but give up in the end. These women are therefore those who fit in our definition of being trafficked. *Fardia (CS,K-1), who had come to India lured by an offer of work as a craftperson, was physically tortured for two days and threatened with dire consequences if she did not agree to accept customers when she was sold to a brothel. She is working 'independently' but still within the clutches of her original buyer Mustak whom she has to pay Rs.2500 every month.*

*Rabeya (CS,K-5) was sold for Rs.6000/- by her 'lover' who had gone through the motion of a fake marriage. She had to accept clients much against her will from the very next day of her so called marriage.*

There are others who are working as '*chhukris*' (new entrants) and do not have any control over their earnings. It should be mentioned that among such a group there are girls (CS,K-3) who do not desire to continue and become seasoned prostitutes-known as '*reddy*'. Among the regular sex workers are part time sex workers and those who have risen to the position of brothel owners and had become peer educators. Of the 9 sex workers who have children, all keep their children with them.



## **ii. Part-time Sex Workers**

There are at least two women in Kolkata who do not live in red light areas of Kolkata but work as sex workers on a part time basis. One of them is also married and is currently working as a peer educator for a NGO run HIV/AIDS prevention project.

The practicing sex workers, on an average, earn between Rs.200-350 per day. But there are seasonal variations. More clients are entertained during festivals. Slack times coincide with such natural hazards as the flood that inundated substantial parts of Kolkata during September-October 2000. Most part time sex workers are 'independent' and have to pay their room rent from where they operate and bear other expenses.

## **iii. From Sex Worker to Brothel Owner**

There is one woman who started as a sex worker but now has become a brothel owner. *Shilpa Mondal (CS,B-23) and her sister both became sex workers in Mumbai. They were able to save enough money and turned into brothel owners. They could pay a 'selami' or advance down payment of Rs.1,00,000/- for two rooms and now 6 Bangladeshi women work as sex workers under them. Shilpa charges these girls Rs.100/- per client and the girls also have to pay Rs.150/- as rent and for electricity. Shilpa herself has not given up her work as a sex worker but accepts clients selectively. She describes herself as 'brothel manager'.*

## **iv. From Sex Worker to Peer Educator**

The HIV/AIDS projects in and around red light areas have created options for the seasoned sex workers to be involved in another kind of work. There are 2 women (1 in Kolkata, who is still in business and 1 in Mumbai who has left the profession) working in these projects.

*Tara was kidnapped from Kathmandu 35 years ago and sold for Rs.50,000/- in Kamatipura brothel in Mumbai (CS,B-16). Unable to speak even Hindi when she was initially brought here, she resisted as much as she could. For 4/5 days she refused to eat. She was physically tortured by her 'malkin' (woman brothel owner) but yet she would not yield. Finally, the malkin pleaded with her that if Tara did not agree, her money that she bought Tara with, would be totally lost. Tara found she had little option, she also felt pity and thus she ultimately surrendered herself to her new life. It has been a long journey since for Tara.*

*Gradually she became an 'independent' sex worker and took her own room. She chose her own malkin and the new malkin gave her full freedom of movement. Her earnings in those days were good and she charged Rs1000-2000/-, sometimes even more. She developed a relationship of affection with her new malkin and when the malkin had cancer, Tara spent all her savings for her treatment. With age her practice started declining and she was forced to move to a 'jhuggi' (shanty). She was lucky to get a job as a peer educator and today earns Rs.1500/- a month. She is also happily married to a person who had lost his wife a few years ago.*

#### **v. Domestic Help/Worker**

Domestic workers are an important category of occupational people comprising mostly of illegal migrants. In New Delhi, out of 8 women interviewed, 7 were domestic workers. Those who work in better-off areas, earn Rs.2000-3000/- per month, by working on an average in 6-8 houses a day. In less prosperous areas, the earnings are much less, not more than Rs. 20-30 per day. In their experience, it is better to work in Muslim dominated areas/households as they are more sympathetic to migrants from Bangladesh. Despite speaking the same language, Bangla it is difficult for the Bangladeshis to get jobs in this category in Kolkata -Hindu households do not usually keep Muslim house helps. There is no such discrimination in the other cities specially Mumbai. In Mumbai, 5/13 women work as domestic helps. The earning level is better than that of New Delhi.

#### **vi. Home Manager**

Three women in Mumbai and two in Kolkata currently describe themselves as home managers. However, this does not mean any change in their status for the two in Kolkata, because earlier in Bangladesh, their status was the same. But for the three in Mumbai, this is a change and 'rise' in status.

*Taslima (CS,B-1) was deserted by her husband years ago in Bangladesh. In her desperate urge to earn money and raise her son, she sought the help of a dalal to enter West Bengal, about 13 years ago. From there she went to Mumbai. She started working in the retail fish market for cleaning and scaling shrimps and prawns. Her son was ill after a few months and she came back to Bangladesh. Here she left her son with her parents and came back to Mumbai. This time her situation improved and she got a job in a utensil factory for cleaning and polishing. Here, she met a vendor in utensils (from Bihar) who had come to try his luck*

*in Mumbai. Ultimately they married and she worked for five years after her marriage. Now she does not work any more. With their savings, her husband has bought a taxi, which he himself drives. They have also bought some land. Everyday, her husband's earning is about Rs.600/- from which they save Rs.200/- Recently, Taslima's son from previous marriage has come to stay with them and works as a tailoring apprentice. For Taslima, it has been a long journey with a happy ending of a satisfied home manager now.*

*Rahima (CS,B-2) came with her daughter 10/11 years ago and had to struggle a lot to eke out a living. Her daughter is about 16 now. Her marriage is being arranged in Bangladesh. Six months ago Rahima met a man from Bangladesh and married him. He does paint jobs on cars. He does not want Rahima to work anymore. The daughter, who earns Rs.1000/- a month as a domestic help, was not at all happy at her mother's marriage at such late age. However, Rahima was eager to marry to avoid loneliness and she is happy with her status as a housewife now.*

*Tahmina (CS,B-3) came to Mumbai at the age of six with her mother. When she grew up a little she started working in the local vegetable market. About two years before the interview, she had married an Indian and is happy. She plans to go back to Bangladesh with her husband and settle down there. When asked why she did not marry someone from Bangladesh, she replied that it is common among Bangladeshi men to desert or divorce their wives, so she preferred an Indian.*

#### **Others:**

People from Bangladesh living in India as illegal migrants do so because they had come here being lured by the tales of opportunities and options awaiting them. However all have not been lucky. We thus have come across women giving in to begging, and also combining ragpicking with begging. Only one woman apparently has connections with the underworld in Kolkata and peddles drug.

#### **For Men:**

Of the 14 men in our sample, many started their own business, however small (5). Some joined the workforce as wage labour, either skilled or unskilled (3). There are some young

boys who are students (2). Some became self-employed as quack doctor or taxi-owner/driver or tailor (3). One became a ragpicker.

#### **i. Business**

Among those who started their business, two are based in Kolkata and three in New Delhi. Some (CS,K-20) came with the experience of the same trade. Another deals as a whole-seller of scrap metals and used paper.

*Abdul Sattar (CS,D-2) was lucky enough to be sponsored by his sister who had come before him with her family. With support from her, Abdul was able to become a fruit-seller in the same locality where he now lives.*

*Rafique (CS,D-12) has made it good. His story, literally, is one of rags to riches. Starting his life in New Delhi as a rag picker, he started saving. Then he started recruiting other ragpickers and became a whole-seller of scrap metals and waste paper. He was of course supported by his wife's family who had come and settled down in New Delhi before Rafique. In 1995 he was able to buy a piece of land for Rs.80,000/- on which he has his godown as well as five 'jhuggis' (room made of bamboo, polythene sheets and the like) which he has rented out. Thus today he is a landlord of sorts- of a godown and juggi.*

#### **ii. Self-employed**

Among those who, became self-employed (3), probably the most interesting experience is that of *Habib (CS,B-6) of Mumbai. Habib knows several languages including Hindi and Marathi, apart from Bangla. He was involved in a murder case four years before the interview. The case is still pending. He is married with two daughters and three sons. His wife is currently working as a maid in Kuwait. She brings good money when she returns after each assignment of 2-3 years. With his wife's earnings, Habib has bought a taxi which he drives himself.*

*Abdul Rafique (CS,K-28) is lucky in the sense that his father in law, himself an earlier migrant, bought for him some land in the outskirts of the city. Rafique has his own small house there. He has his own sewing machine with which he does tailoring work. When the season is dull, Rafique works as a wage labour.*

Kadir (CS,D-5) is an interesting case. *Way back in 1978, Kadir had entered Pakistan via India and managed to stay there for five years. According to him, he also got training as a paramedic while in Pakistan. Then he returned to Bangladesh. He entered India again in 1985-86 and tried to enter Pakistan again, via Rajasthan. But apparently he was unable to do so because the border was heavily guarded. He then married a Rajasthani woman and now has 6 children and lives in a bustee/slum in New Delhi. In New Delhi too he had received training as a paramedic and now makes a living as a (quack, according to neighbours) doctor.*

### **Summary: Starting Life Anew**

- The first step towards starting a new life is getting a job, finding an accommodation, learning the language
- The next step is to acquire IDs in the form of (food) ration card, get enlisted as a voter, open a bank account. The ultimate is to get a passport
- Enrolling children in schools is part of a process of assimilation, however it is the son who goes to school and not the girl child.
- Most of the people do not feel that they have restricted movement within India.
- Respondents of this study have an easy access to health care and do have access to sought legal services too.
- Getting a job or being engaged in an activity is a condition of staying on, and occupations differ for men and women.
- Of the 14 men who came, some were able to start their own business (5), some joined the workforce as wage labour(3), some became self-employed as (quack) doctor, taxi-owner or tailor (3), some (2) are still students and one became a ragpicker.

- Among those who started their own business, two are in Kolkata and the other three in New Delhi. At least one of them has a flourishing business in New Delhi, though he started his career as a ragpicker.
- Three became self-employed, one in each city. Of them, one is doing well as a taxi-driver but he accumulated his capital by the earnings of his wife who has been sent to Kuwait as a maid. This person also got involved in crime and has a murder case against him. The other self-employed person, based in Kolkata, got the support of his father-in-law. Thus behind the good fortune of these two there is the contribution of their wives/in-laws.
- Among women, a fairly large number (23/51) became sex workers, overwhelming majority in Kolkata. Some of them (2) in Kolkata work as part time sex workers while another is working as a peer educator and is also in business. In Mumbai, one sex worker has now become a brothel-owner and another is working as a peer educator in an HIV-AIDS project.
- Next to sex workers, working as domestic worker is the most important occupation of women in New Delhi (7/8). It is an important occupation in Mumbai also (5/13).
- At least five women, three in Mumbai and two in Kolkata are settled as contended home managers.
- One woman in Kolkata became a drug-peddler, two others are engaged in begging.
- Sex trade is the biggest employer of women from Bangladesh in Kolkata but in New Delhi and partly in Mumbai, the most important occupation for women is working as domestic workers.

## Striking Roots

### 7.1 The Dilemma:

Of the women and men interviewed for the study, a difference in needs, attitudes and planning for the future is quite apparent (**Table 19**). There are however 3 distinct group of people among the respondents. In the first group are people who have settled themselves comfortably and want to stay back in the country of destination (India). The number of women and men in this category is 23/51 and 5/14 respectively. These are the people who want to make India their permanent residence and not go back to their country of origin. The second group comprises 20/51 women and 6/14 men who would like to go back, some day. According to them, they can go back only if they get a secure job or better earning opportunities in the countries of origin than what they get now. The third group is relatively small- they are the ones who have not been able to make up their minds yet (11/65).

<b>Table: 19 Respondents Choice of Future Residence</b>										
<b>Response</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men	%
India	14	3	6	2	3	-	23	45.1	5	35.7
Native Place	8	-	7	-	5	6	20	39.2	6	42.8
Not Decided	8	1	-	1	-	1	8	15.7	3	21.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

Evidently, there are people amongst the illegal migrants and also those who have been trafficked, who are investing money in Bangladesh ((also in India) by buying land. There are still others who are living here but marrying off their daughters in Bangladesh, indicating a desire to maintain old links with home.

Apparently a large segment of the population is in a dilemma. Amongst them are people who had come here as destitutes-in dire economic conditions. They had no land or had lost whatever land they had to river erosion and for various other basic reasons and were thus without a place to live and also a job that gave a decent income. The women among this group were those who had been deserted/divorced by husbands and had to make an independent living. Some amongst them have been deceived and forced into a profession (sex trade) that was not to their liking then, but are willing to continue with it now. Of all the people interviewed some have been doing well in the place of destination, while others have

not fared that well and between these two groups of people there appears to exist a difference of attitude. The group who were destitutes in the place of origin but are doing well now, apparently want to stay on at the present place of residence at least till age permits them to work and earn. They are the ones who buy land or marry their daughters in the place of origin and try to maintain a relationship with the home country and think of going back maybe someday. On the other hand, the people who are not doing well at present and were also destitutes before, are the ones who have not yet decided or have any specific plans for the future. The attitude of this group stems more from apathy.

It may also be mentioned that people who have been working in Mumbai and New Delhi for long and investing in land or business feel that they have a 'right' to stay on in their present residence.

All the cases suggest that at least economically speaking, the respondents are better off than what they were in their places of origin. Many have settled down and doing quite well. 13/51 women and 2/14 men send money to Bangladesh. (**Table 20**) Some have not been able to make it that good, but probably economically is better off than what they were/would have been back home. 20/51 women do not even want to change their occupation (**Table 21**), of them 10 are sex workers. Among men, those who do not want to change their occupation the number is 4/14. Thus of the total respondents about 37% (24/65) do not want to change their occupation and are content with whatever they are doing. Of the 21 women who want to change their occupation nearly half (9/21) are sex workers. It is important to note that although they would like to leave their present profession they would like to settle down here in India with their '*babus*' or steady clients with whom they have a special relationship, at least for sometime.



<b>Table: 20 If Respondents Remit Home</b>										
<b>Response</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men	%
Yes	4	1	5	-	4	1	13	25.5	2	14.3
No	26	3	7	2	3	6	36	70.6	11	78.5
No Response	-	-	1	1	1	-	2	3.9	1	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

<b>Table: 21 Future Plans of Change in Occupation</b>										
<b>Response</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>			
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men	%
Yes	8	1	9	3	4	3	21	41.2	7	50.0
No	14	3	3	-	3	1	20	39.2	4	28.6
No Plan/ Undecided	8	-	1	-	-	3	9	17.6	3	21.4
No Response	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1.9	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>	

## 7.2 Acceptance in Society:

For a migrant, particularly for an illegal migrant, it may be possible to eke out a living and even to do better economically than at home. But that does not necessarily mean that they feel comfortable in their daily social interactions. The respondents were asked if they felt any problem in mixing with the locals or in sending their children to school. A total of 27/51 women and 10/14 men answered that they had free social access. But 24/51 women and 4/14 men felt they were not acceptable to the locals. In other words, majority of the respondents felt that they had social acceptance (*Table 22*). However, many of those who had problems had them for occupational reasons. For example, in Kolkata of the 14 women who had perceptions of problem, 10 are sex workers and the inmates of the NGO rehabilitation home. Among the other 4, 2 lived in a particular area where people point out to them as Bangladeshis. Even the other two who live on the footpaths of Kolkata as ragpickers are derided by other locals as "Beggar Bangladeshis". As Bangladeshis, they are also denied renting of houses even in slums.

In Mumbai, 5 of the women and all men had no such problem. In New Delhi, however, 2/8 women and 4/7 men mentioned that they faced problems. They feel that they are pointed out as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Because of frequent police raids, this identity of theirs has enhanced a feeling of insecurity amongst them.

<b>Table: 22 Respondent's Feeling About Social Acceptance in India</b>									
<b>Response</b>	<b>Kolkata</b>		<b>Mumbai</b>		<b>New Delhi</b>		<b>All</b>		
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	%	Men %
Accepted	16	4	5	3	6	3	27	52.9	10 71.4
Not Accepted	14	-	8	-	2	4	24	47.0	4 28.6
No Response	-	-	-	-	-	-			
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>		<b>14</b>

However in general, with increasing number of migrants, the attitude of the locals towards those from Bangladesh has undergone a distinct change. In Mumbai, 5 to 7 years earlier, illegal migrants staying on the footpaths, were fed by the wealthy locals. Today this is rare. Instead, young children especially boys, are branded as thieves. There are still others, in all cities, who feel that due to the migrants there is pressure on local resources and there is an increase in the rate of crimes.

### **7.3 Present Political Situation and Law Enforcing Authorities:**

The women and men who are living and working in New Delhi were very uncertain about their lives and livelihood as the present party in power is against illegal migrants, specially those from Bangladesh. There are frequent police raids taking place in the areas, mostly in slums, where the Bangladeshis normally reside. According to the respondents, unlike the previous government the present government was against them. They however felt that situation will get better just before the election time. All the people interviewed in New Delhi had some affiliation with political parties. For example, earlier when there used to be fires in the slum\* important political leaders, such as Indira Gandhi, V.P. Singh and others would come to the slums and distribute ration cards and money to rebuilt their houses. They would come with food and medical teams would provide them health support. But now there is no such thing. They are identified as illegal foreign nationals and instead the police comes and arrests them.

The respondents informed that the police who patrol the area harass and threaten both men and women by saying that they will be picked up during the next raid and that they should leave this country immediately. Once, picked up they would be in the lock-ups for an uncertain period of time to be shipped to the bordering districts in order to be PUSHED BACK

to their country of origin. The women alleged that there are cases of police taking the young girls and sexually harassing and abusing them; they do not talk about it as the life of the young girl would be stigmatized.

The respondents in New Delhi informed that previously they would pick them up and keep them in the local police station lock-ups –releasing them after 5-7days. Now, they keep them in lock-ups for more than 3weeks and beat them up brutally. Very recently (about 2/3days ago of the interviews for this study) there was a raid in the slums of Jamuna Pusta in New Delhi around 3a.m. The police picked up the out-spoken, prominent leaders of this community. The resident people there were very scared fearing that next time the authorities would be more strict and would drive them all (Bangladeshi) out of the country. The respondents further informed that the men do not sleep in the huts; right after dark the men (aged 17+) leave their homes and stay on the footpaths away from the locality. They come back around noon and leave again in the evenings. But the Police comes often and verbally abuses and also harass the women.

In New Delhi we also visited other slum areas, such as Jahangirpura and have seen that slums (housing people from West Bengal) were demolished. These homeless people reported that just because they were Muslims and spoke Bangla it was the only reason for their huts to be demolished “....even the dogs are better treated in this country” remarked they.

The respondents in Mumbai also reported of increased police raids and demolition of a lot of the slums. And there is a constant patrolling of police in all the slums. Few respondents (CS,B-2, CS,B-3) themselves and/or their family members have been taken to the police lock-ups. They were released after their family paid a handsome (Rs. 2500-3500) amount of money to the local police station. *Taslima (CS,B-3) is married to an Indian, she was picked up by the police twice, once from her home and another time from the road. While she was picked-up from her home the police had beaten up her husband (an Indian) because he was married to an illegal Bangladeshi. Her husband paid Rs. 2000/- to get her out from the lock-up.*

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\* a regular event- often an accident but some time caused intentionally; during such incidents the fire fighters cannot enter the area through very narrow roads and all card-board and plastic made huts are burnt along with the important

Yet another case is of Rahima's daughter (CS,B-2). *Rahima's daughter who is in her teens was also picked up by the police and she paid Rs. 7000/- and got her daughter out from the police lock-up. She also told that the police often sexually harass and rape young girls and women while they are in the lock-ups. She can not even sleep in peace because the CID (police) come and raid the slum mostly during night and the slum dwellers have to be alert all the time in order to escape the police by running away from home.*

#### **7.4 Roots of Insecurity:**

The people we spoke to have left behind their countries of origin. Most came in search of a new life. Many have been successful in striking roots in India. Some are still striving to do so and very few would like to go back in the near future.

The process of striking roots is not an easy one. Apart from material problems, there are problems as stated above of social acceptance and legality.

But apart from this sometimes disaster strikes in other forms too. For some it may be a communal riots. *Akbar (CS,D-9) had come to Mumbai before the 1992 riots. He was working as a labourer in a factory. He was settling down in Mumbai when the riots broke out. Then Akbar fled to New Delhi. Now he has to work as a rag picker in New Delhi.*

The major factor in generating insecurity is however the nagging fear that they would be marked out as illegal immigrants and pushed back to their own country. From time to time this feeling of insecurity accentuates because of harassment and raids by the authorities for hounding out people from Bangladesh. This insecurity is very strong, among the people we spoke to, in New Delhi. In Mumbai also, this fear prevails but to a lesser extent. Kolkata is the only place where the people we spoke to did not seem to be under any such threat – here they have no fear of raids or lock ups.

Respondents when asked about why they did not shift to Kolkata from New Delhi and Mumbai where they felt more secure, replied, that Kolkata was a relatively poor place and had little to offer in terms of jobs or better earnings than what they had in their present

location. This is an indication of the fact that despite all odds, earning a decent living, be it in a foreign country, was the prime objective of all the respondents interviewed for this study.

### **7.5 Future Plans and Expectations:**

Interestingly those people who have children have articulated their plans and expectations for the future. While those without any children were fatalistic-leaving all future actions to 'fate'. This was more true for the sex workers. Sex workers with children expressed their desire to leave the brothels and start anew elsewhere in India or go back home someday - but to what they had no idea. The others wanted to stay back in India in their present trade but wanted to visit periodically parents/relations in Bangladesh although they were concerned and wary about their present status vis-a-vis their acceptance in the community. Those in rehabilitation centers (run by Sanlaap) wanted to go back but they too were not sure about how they would be received at home- the profession being stigmatized it is unfortunate that only the women is criminalised and victimized within it. The boys (in Prayas) on the other hand, were studying and having skill training. All dreamt of going back home (to Bangladesh and Nepal) and use their skill for work/trade.

The migrants had more concrete plans for the future. Of those who plan to stay on in India they have bought landed property –this to establish their right to stay. Those who have married Indian men or women plan on leaving their present residence and set up home in the in-law's villages. Also, they would like their sons and daughters to get married in Bangladesh – daughters should go back to Bangladesh with their husbands, but for the sons they desire that they take in brides from Bangladesh but stay back and work in India. There are also those who plan to go back to Bangladesh someday "*..there is no peace of mind in a foreign country*". They are working towards saving enough, acquiring landed property and then go home. However those migrants who have not fared well, have not been able to acquire any property at home, would like to stay on in India and not go back to Bangladesh.

All undocumented persons felt that the Indian government cannot stop people like them from coming to India. According to them "*...at home there is no work, we have no food...people like us... we will come*". They had pinned their hopes on the present government of Bangladesh and the Prime Minister in particular, to own them and make their

life comfortable while in India. *"...if Hasina had accepted our presence, things would have been better...we would have been spared of our constant harassment"*.

### **Summary: Striking Roots**

The process of getting assimilated to a new country as victims of trafficking or after illegal entry is never easy. Analysing the 65 cases, certain facts emerge.

- In most of the cases, the persons involved have been able to improve their economic condition compared to what it was in Bangladesh. This is largely true even of those who were victims of trafficking and forced to join the sex trade.
- 20/51 women and 6/14 men cherish dreams of one day going back to their country of origin. Some of them have started investing money in Bangladesh by buying land.
- Some are living here but marrying their daughters in Bangladesh, suggesting that they want to maintain a link with their country of origin. This also indicates the fact that it is not easy to sever links with one's country of origin/birth.
- There is always an attempt by those who came here to legitimise their stay. The usual methods of legitimising their stay and to prove that they actually belong here is to get Ration Cards, Voter IDs, Passports etc. Some have opened bank accounts and even participated in national elections.
- Among all these, ration cards and voter IDs are the most sought after documents. Unfortunately, this very important information has an error of coverage. Information on ration cards and voter ID could be collected from only 32 respondents in the three cities. Others were reluctant to give out the information. Half of these people (16/32) have not been able to get any of the two IDs. 12/32 have got both, three have only ration card and one has only voter ID.
- 8/65 have opened bank accounts and 3/65 have Indian passports.

- By and large there is no problem of moving about from one place to another in Kolkata. In New Delhi, few feel uncomfortable lest they draw attention of the authorities.
- For a majority of the women (27/51) and men (10/14), there is no problem in social interaction with locals or sending children to school. Those who mention of problems are sometimes people under special circumstances, i.e., sex workers of Kolkata. Mumbai seems to be totally free of any such problem.
- There is no problem for most (39/65) as regards access to legal services, or to health services (60/65).
- Reports of police harassment are common in New Delhi. Brutal behaviour and sexual abuse while in lock-ups have been experienced by some.
- Two factors that contribute to the feeling of insecurity are communal riots and fear of being traced out by the authorities resulting in lock-up and ultimate deportation.

## Summary and Conclusion

As per topic of the research report the objective was to study trafficking in women and children with a view to see how people from Nepal and Bangladesh is trafficked to India, what they do after their arrival, what was their present situation and what was their future plans. The objective of the study was also to investigate into the socio economic background, reasons of leaving home –the circumstances under which people decide to leave their country of birth and to move on to an unknown place. The main idea was to understand the pull and push factors and also the reason for which a person keeps on living in India. Most importantly the study was to be based on the views, needs and wishes of the persons concerned /“victims” themselves. The study broadened its sphere by including also the undocumented migrants smuggled into India from Bangladesh. However with very few Nepali respondents identified as trafficked and no illegal migrants from Nepal (as Nepalese have rights to enter/work) this report, it maybe reminded, is based more on information provided by the respondents from Bangladesh.

To track down and identify the trafficked women to India from Bangladesh and Nepal, investigations were carried out in brothels, rehabilitation centers and slums. It was in the slums that we came across a large number of ‘migrants’. At the end of the investigation we had more women who were actually (illegal) migrants and not ‘trafficked’ in a strict sense. If we refer back to our definition of a “trafficked person” we observe that these were women most of whom had come ‘voluntarily’ to India and were not ‘deceived’ or ‘coerced’ into crossing the borders. However, the similarity between such an undocumented ‘migrant’ and a ‘trafficked’ was that both had gained access to India through ‘fraudulent means’. Also, migrants had used the same contact persons/ *dalals*/middlemen who operated as traffickers and had undergone similar process - from origin to destitution (journey/routes/ bribes/harassment and abuse/modes of transport) like the trafficked persons.

The trafficked women on the other hand, whom we were able to identify were few in numbers, were all engaged in sex trade and were victims of deception and coercion. They were lured out of their homes with promises of marriage/jobs and were then coerced and placed in an abusive/ exploitative state. Although majority of the trafficked women were



forced and/or tricked into prostitution, within such a small population and an even smaller sample of sex workers from Bangladesh, we came across women who have 'willingly' crossed the borders to work as sex workers and were therefore not 'trafficked'. We have also come across woman who was 'abducted/ kidnapped' but was not forced into prostitution.

There is a clear distinction within the total population, between those who had moved voluntarily and those who came otherwise. One came willingly/voluntarily with an explicit intention and expectation to make a living-even if it be as a sex worker. While the other was forced, deceived and lured into coming here for various reasons. The first group had taken the decision to cross the border alone or with consultation with a near relative/friend - certain situations/circumstances (economic/social) at home triggered their decision to move. While for the other group, the decision was often somebody else's -where the decision to leave home and cross over was the women's, then it was because they were lured through false promises. But later were deceived or forced into joining 'exploitative/abusive' work - she had no intention neither had she the control over the decision made for her. An element of 'force/coercion' was active in the case of these women in the second group. The element of force was also present for those abducted/kidnapped -the persons concerned were at the mercy of the abductors, had no say and was in the dark as to what awaited them at the end of the road.

For the first group of the population who came voluntarily to make a living, the expectation was more or less fulfilled. Some felt cheated as they had expected more - a result of a lack of proper prior information. But after coming to India most had a place to live, their jobs/trade gave them a substantial income, some opened bank accounts, saved and also invested in India and in Bangladesh. Amongst them many had married in India (mostly men), were raising a family with the children going to schools. Yet others had acquired ration cards, enrolled themselves as voters and had passports. Maintaining ties with original home through investments and sons/daughters marriage, some after acquiring property and with money in hand would one day like to go back. The majority, despite an environment of harassment and insecurity including often, restricted movements and barriers of language, aspired to stay on. They have also invested in India. Evidently, majority are in general, better off than what they were in Bangladesh. This is true for the women as well as the men whom we term undocumented/illegal migrants.

The second group who were initially tricked into leaving home are mostly women, who were later forced into prostitution – a situation from where one usually “cannot completely come out” for the stigma attached to it. They had left home with people they knew and trusted, to better their position economically and/or socially but were sold to brothel owners instead. Among the sex workers only those with children look forward to getting out of the brothels and start life anew elsewhere in India and/or go back home to Bangladesh someday. Those with no such ties have no intention of going back; given the option these women would not even change their profession –having more or less resigned themselves to ‘fate’/*bhaggo*.

The commonality between the two groups of people is that in their movement across the border, persons who facilitated their movement were the same. Both resorted to fraudulent means aided by professional ‘*dalals*’ and went through the same process in order to be smuggled out. The difference that exists is in terms of money spent and sexual harassment. People who have willingly gone had to bear all expense, while those who were lured and/or forced did not have to spend any. Women who were victims of deception and also those who were willingly going away to join the sex trade, had to pay a price of a different kind - they were sexually abused by *dalals*/law enforcing agencies positioned on both sides of the border, before being sold or passed on to the brothel owners. While those who have voluntarily crossed over and are working as domestic helps, in factories etc., were not subjected to any such harassment or abuse –even if they were, we have no information of it, since it is a situation that women will hardly want to reveal.

It is apparent that an organised network is actively engaged on both sides of the border – the network that exists operates equally for both- trafficked or illegally migrated women and men. By the way money changed hands - often openly, from respondent to *dalals* to law enforcing personnel to other third people or party, transporting/smuggling people across borders evidently is a lucrative business. People who want to better their economic position for want of anything better to do in the country of origin, take advantage of this organised group who help in their ‘illegal movement’. On the other hand, with a demand for girls/women in the brothels of especially Kolkata (also Mumbai), the members of organised network/gangs on both sides of the border take advantage of the border situation and also the gullible, often unmarried/deserted girls and women from poor households, by ‘trafficking’ them.

However we infer at this point, that for one trafficked person there are many more who have voluntarily moved and are therefore (illegal) migrants. On the other hand, among the apparently trafficked, there could be illegal migrants, if there was no force/coercion involved in their movement starting from leaving home and en route. In not being deceived and forced into abusive/exploitative situation in the country of destination they are what we term as undocumented migrants. In case of persons who can be identified as being 'actually' trafficked, separate treatment from those of the migrants is what they deserve. The laws and their rights in the country of destination need to be looked at from a completely different perspective.

The prime reason for majority of the respondents (trafficked or illegally migrated) to leave the country of origin was to have a better life socially/economically, in a country that had apparently more to offer. Majority people who left are those who did not have food security and a secure livelihood in their country of origin. A large number of people are migrating to places, which are economically better off than their own area. This is a common phenomenon world wide. Each and every people aspire to have a better life and to fulfil this dream people have been migrating within and outside the country, some are doing it legally and some illegally.

The people from Bangladesh living in India without any legal status are termed as "illegal foreign nationals". India is a vast country and it does have a lot of illegal foreign nationals from different neighboring countries viz. Afghanistan, Myanmar, Tibet, who have been given 'refugee status'. These (political) refugees are not engaged in gainful activities and India has to shoulder their burden. Having a legal status as refugees they are not harassed by the law enforcing agencies nor threatened to leave the country. Whereas the economically disadvantaged people of Bangladesh who are working in India, doing various odd jobs and thereby fulfilling the demand for certain services for which there is a dearth of local labor are being harassed and abused at every step. Also, these illegal foreign nationals also become very valuable during Election time. But while conducting this study we have found hundreds of Bangladeshi living in constant fear. As "illegal foreign nationals" some had experienced brutal behavior from the law enforcing agencies, some had been arrested and were in the lock-ups and no one was allowed to visit them. There are still others who were also being threatened with eviction anytime.

The undocumented migrants from Bangladesh besides engaged in a variety of activities play a major role in managing waste of the big cities of India. It is often said that had it not been for the migrants, Mumbai would have had a 'smoky mountain' like Manila. India, the receiving country, benefits from these undocumented migrants who do a great many odd jobs and form the bulk of cheap labour. In turn the migrants from Bangladesh are benefited as they have a secure livelihood which was not available at home. 'Migration' is acknowledged as a fundamental human right but there is no such policy/mechanism to recognize the rights to life and security of livelihood for the 'illegal foreign nationals' who have been living in India for years and who we rather term as ECONOMIC REFUGEES or ECONOMIC MIGRANTS.

People have a right to leave one's country and as long as there is a possibility of entering another country they may enter if they want to. The geographical location of India, Bangladesh and also Nepal is such that despite 'wire fences' and the like, people wanting to cross the border will always be able to do so. The more the ban the more would there be illegal entry. But had the authorities/**law enforcing agencies** on both sides of the border been **less corrupt** and more **honest** in carrying out their duties the tide of people from a stream could have been reduced to a trickle. Inside the country there is a need to build up **awareness** through **proper information** of the **networks** taking advantage of the people and also of the harsh treatment that one can confront in the place of destination. **Freedom of movement** of women should be insured so that they are not made to be accompanied in their travel by a male guardian (like in Nepal or in Bangladesh-the ban on women going abroad for domestic work) resulting in further deception and exploitation. More importantly, **food and livelihood security** within the country has to be **insured** for **all** irrespective of gender, class and religion through proper **development policies** and **projects** if illegal movement is to be combated.

Illegal migrants technically have no legal rights in the receiving country. But viewed from a humanitarian angle they deserve better treatment than what is meted out to them. Here are people who have taken advantage of the prevailing conditions and situations and once having gained entrance legally or illegally it falls on the State to shoulder their responsibility at least to a point where one's right to life is not at stake. The respondents in the study apparently had easy access to health and legal services but had no legal status whatsoever. As for those trafficked, they too had no legal status but once identified and tracked by the

police in (periodic) raids, were promptly produced in courts. In the courts the cases drag on for years as the countries concerned take their time to determine the 'nationality' of the 'rescued victim'. Meanwhile with the trafficked as a 'front' the undocumented migrants are subjected to hounding/rounding up to be followed by forced eviction by the authorities. Unfortunately, in the name of illegal migrants from Bangladesh, Bangla speaking Indian Muslims evidently have often become victims of certain political parties/law enforcing agencies whose aims and objectives are communal. It is important for the countries concerned to create conditions through cooperation and a spirit of accommodation to enable the people- trafficked and/or undocumented migrant to return to the country of origin voluntarily and with dignity. With a proper policy to recognize reality the Trafficked and the Migrant need not be victims of any COMMUNAL CLEANSING, PUSH IN and/or PUSH BACK in either, India or Bangladesh.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Persons concerned should be clearly identified first. Persons/Women "actually" trafficked deserves separate treatment from those of the migrants. The laws and their rights in the country of destination need to be looked at from a completely different perspective. It is also true that the situation for both the groups, trafficked and undocumented migrants, are intertwined and their problems have often to be addressed simultaneously:

1. Both Bangladesh and the Indian government have to accept the fact that illegal migration and trafficking is taking place from Bangladesh to India in a large scale. And it involves the most unfortunate people. Proper policies to recognize reality.
2. Bi-lateral discussions between India and Bangladesh should be initiated for recognition of the migration and trafficking phenomenon.
3. These migrant and trafficked people have a right to livelihood. They are not living off any charity or "dole" but working and contributing to the economy of both the countries.

4. Their Rights' as a human are constantly violated and their basic rights' must be restored by recognizing their (Bangladeshi people) presence in India.
5. The corrupt security forces in the borders of both the countries should be held responsible for being facilitators to trafficking as well as illegal migration.
6. Awareness campaign should be taken up along the borders of both the countries to make people aware of the realities of trafficking – what the “trafficked victims” suffer and the violence that they face ever after. These campaign should take place with the help of NGOs working in both the countries, involve local governments that is Union Parisad in Bangladesh as well as Pachayets in West Bengal. BDR, BSF and local youth clubs, women's groups. Media should be involved in this awareness campaign.
7. People living near the borders of Bangladesh should also be made aware of the problems faced by the illegal migrants living in different cities in India and that it is not all “green” on the other side of the border.
8. The present development policies and plans have to be evaluated so that the development planners and policy makers can come up with strategies which will include the poor young people (both women and men) who are desperately migrating in a large number and who are facing continuous harassment in alien countries.