

**TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN IN BANGLADESH:  
EXPERIENCES OF SURVIVORS AND CHALLENGES TO THEIR  
REINTEGRATION**

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*For My Mother Rahima Khatun  
Who Stayed All Alone in Bangladesh  
Counting Each Second of My Return at Home.*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

BDR- Bangladesh Rifles

BNWLA- Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CRC- Convention on the Rights of the Child

CWCS- Center for Women and Children Studies

DAM- Dhaka Ahsania Mission

DCs- The Deputy Commissioners

FGD- Focus Group Discussion

GATTW- Global Alliance against Traffic in Women

GO- Government Organization

HIES- Household Income and Expenditure Survey

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICDDR,B- International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research, Bangladesh

INCIDIN Bangladesh- Integrated Community and Industrial Development in Bangladesh

INGO- International Non-governmental Organization

ILO- International Labor Organization

IOM- International Organization for Migration

NGO- Non-governmental Organization

NPA- National Plan of Action

NSD- Norwegian Social Science Data Services

OCs- Officers in Charge of Police Stations

RJ- Rights Jessore

SAARC- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SANLAAP- Sanlaap is an Indian feminist NGO

SPs- Superintendents of Police

STDs- Sexually Transmitted Diseases

STI- Sexually-transmitted infections

TIP- Trafficking in person

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

UNICEF- United Nations Children Fund

UN- United Nation



## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to focus on the challenges behind the reintegration process of trafficking survivors in their families and communities in Bangladesh. In doing so, this research tries to explore the experiences of trafficked survivors in the process of being trafficked, their life in brothel and returning to Bangladesh. In addition, it helps to understand the perception of survivors in their reintegration along with the perceptions of community people and family members. This study also brings forth in discussion how their experiences in brothel and challenges to reintegration have affected their construction of identity. This research was carried out with the help of BNWLA and it intends to find out what BNWLA is doing to reduce those challenges.*

*This study is consisted of 12 in-depth interviews with trafficking survivors, two focus group discussion with community people, some interviews with survivors' parents and BNWLA key persons. The data was collected in June-August and analyzed the data using two different theories: Empowerment theory and Stigma theory. Thematic approach has been used to analyze data.*

*The study findings show that reintegration of survivors is challenging. Shelter home provides facilities to the survivors to recover themselves. It takes long time to recover psychologically for the survivors and they lose the self interest to return to community. Self stigmatization of survivors becomes severe when they start living in community. BNWLA is working to change people's mind about the reintegration of survivors and provide facilities to the survivors to get empowered. However, the empowerment of survivors is not easy due to poverty and stigma imposed by the community people.*

*This study recommends to increase the awareness among people about survivors' reintegration. BNWLA should be more strategic to ensure sustainable sources of income that will stop the survivor re-trafficking. Government, donor agencies and other NGOs should collaborate with each other to strengthen the anti-trafficking program and facilitate the reintegration of survivors.*

**Key words:** Bangladeshi women trafficked survivors, reintegration, empowerment, stigma, self identity.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background:

Trafficking is a crucial violation of human rights and is considered as a form of slavery all over the world. Women and children, particularly, are in great demand in so far as the different sites of trafficking are concerned. Trafficking is a wide spread business that not only violates women and children's human rights but also push them towards a vulnerable state with no protection of life. Women and girls are demanded to fulfill the "demand for a vast array of personalized, reproductive services in the entertainment and sex industry, domestic work, and the marriage market" (Sanghera, 1999: 4). Trafficking, which is a human rights concern, creates the situation where survivors experience different forms of violence and exploitation. Every year many men, women and children are trafficked for different purposes; women mostly for prostitution or commercial sex work, and children for the purposes of camel jockeying, domestic labor and so on (Shamim, 2001). The International Labor Organization (ILO)<sup>1</sup> estimates that there are 2.4 billion people in the world at any given time are engaged in forced labor and are subjected to exploitation as a result of trafficking (ILO, 2008).

There has been a long debate in last few decades about the definition of trafficking as it includes various issues like prostitution, forced work, pornography, sex work, and mutilation of human body. Considering those facts, the United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, adopted in November 2000 (UN, 2000), has given a definition that is commonly accepted by all institutions. It defines trafficking as:

*"the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, or 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*

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_090356.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_090356.pdf) on 10th of April, 2012

*others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (p.2).*

Trafficking is generally identified as a cross-border crime, but it also happens within national boundaries. Then it is called internal trafficking (NPA, 2012). Bangladesh is a country that faces both the problem of internal trafficking and a huge amount of cross border trafficking every year. Following the UN definition, Bangladesh in the present NPA 2012 (National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking) presents the following definition of human trafficking given by the *The Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Ordinance 2011* as:

*"the selling, buying, recruitment, receipt, transportation, transfer, or harbouring of any person for the purpose of sexual-exploitation, labour-exploitation or any other form of exploitation whether in or outside of Bangladesh by means of (a) threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or (b) abduction, fraud or deception, or of the abuse of any person's socio-economic, environmental or other types of vulnerability, or (c) of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person" (NPA, 2012: 7).<sup>2</sup>*

Bangladesh is considered as a source country of trafficking. Also, trafficking in women in Bangladesh has become an issue of concern during the last few decades having huge impacts on survivors' life. Bangladesh government has taken lots of initiatives to combat trafficking; however, the achievement is very limited to control trafficking. NGOs and other agencies also have not succeeded in generating notable changes through the advocacy and intervention programs (BIPSS, 2011). Bangladeshi women who are trafficked, generally go through severe physical and psychological violence's that hamper their socio-economic well-being and destroy their self esteem, confidence level and potentiality. After coming back, stigmatization excludes women from the mainstream society and survivors come back is not appreciated by the community members and families (Shamim and Kabir, 1997).

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<sup>2</sup> An unofficial translation of s. 3(1) of the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Ordinance 2011. This definition is in line with the definition of human trafficking provided in the most significant international treaty on human trafficking, the UN Anti-Trafficking Protocol 2000 (art 3).

NGOs have started working for the reintegration of women in society and they have sheltered the survivors to provide them with psychological support and skill development training (Bangladesh Country report, 2011). Chen and Marcovici (2003) addressed the term of reintegration which refers to the process of reunification of trafficked survivors within family and society. Studies show that the reintegration process to give survivors a normal life is not easy (Shamim and Kabir, 1997; Derks, 1997; Human Rights Watch, 1995; Terre des hommes, 2003). Women who come back to Bangladesh after trafficking are often considered as ‘prostitutes’. They are not welcomed in society and they are treated as a social evil or as a threat to religious or cultural values (Gazi, et. al, 2001).

This study tries to concentrate on the process of reintegration of trafficked returnees in Bangladeshi society. I have done my field work with the help of BNWLA (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association). This NGO is working about trafficking issues from 1993 and processes the reintegration of survivors. The staffs from BNWLA have arranged my interviews with survivors both living in shelter home and living in families or staying alone in cities to work in factories. This study focuses on understanding the state of trafficking in Bangladesh, to explore the experience of survivors and to find out the challenges they face in reintegration process. The next section of this chapter will give an outline of the trafficking situation globally. Following the global history, the national situation of trafficking will be revealed. NGO response in Bangladesh towards combating trafficking will be presented to understand the extent and coverage of intervention programs. The next section will highlight the legal and national measures taken to combat trafficking in Bangladesh. Thereafter I will describe the purpose of this study and research problem, and finally I will describe the organization of thesis.

## **1.2 Trafficking situation- an overview**

Trafficking is a form of violence that is a global security concern now. This study depicts the context of trafficking from global, Asian and Bangladesh perspective. I am going to show some estimated numbers of trafficking. Numbers of trafficked people vary from region to region, and as will be shown, numbers are highly unreliable. The United States State Department (2006) data has shown that 600,000 to 820,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders each year. Of the total amount, approximately, 80 percent are women and girls and up to

50 percent of them are children. United States Trafficking in Persons Report, (2007) states that human trafficking is now the second largest illicit money making venture in the world after trafficking of weapons and drugs whereas in 2006, it was ranked as the third largest business of illicit money making (United States Department of State, 2008). These are mostly women and also children of countries that are going through economic transition to market economy (Truong 1999). A relatively recent study of the International Labor Organization shows that 43 percent of all victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation, another 32 percent are victims of economic exploitation, and the rest remains undetermined (ILO, 2005). Various global conventions have pointed out the term of women's trafficking. For instance, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989), Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), UN conference on trafficking in human beings (in Chaulagai, 2009).

In Asia, estimates show that around 30 million women and children have been victimized by trafficking and exploited sexually over the last 30 years (Association of women's rights in development, 2002). South Asia has been experiencing a vast number of women and girls being trafficked for prostitution (UNDP, 2005). Huda (2006) explained the effect of tsunami that hit South East Asia, South Asia, and East Africa on December 26, 2004. It killed more than 160,000 people, and affected over 5,000,000 people severely and made 35,000 children orphan. These orphaned children together with hundreds of thousand affected women and girls are at high risk of being trafficked for prostitution or other forms of exploitation due to their vulnerability. Paul and Hasnath (2000) in their study stated that New Delhi and Karachi have become major South Asian centers for the international buying and selling of trafficked women as slaves, maids, wives or prostitutes.

## 1.2.1 Bangladesh situation



**Population:** 163,654,860 (July 2013 est)  
**Population Growth Rate:** 1.292%  
**Birth Rate:** 24.68 births/1,000 population (2010 est.)  
**Life Expectancy:** total population: 60.25 years  
Male: 57.57 years, female: 63.03 years  
**Literacy Rate:** definition: age 15 and over can read and write  
Total population: 56.8%  
Male: 61.3%, female: 52.2% (2010 est.)  
**Net Migration Rate:** -2.53 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2010 est.)  
**Unemployment Rate:** 5% (2012)  
**Population below poverty line:** 31.51% (2010 est.)  
**Gross Domestic Product per Capita:** \$2,000 (2012)  
**Religions:** Muslim 89.5%, Hindu 9.6%, other 0.9% (2004)  
**Languages:** Bangla (official, also known as Bengali), English  
**Ethnic Groups:** Bengali 98%, other 2% (includes tribal groups, non-Bengali Muslims) (1998)  
**Capital:** Dhaka

*Source: CIA world fact book, 2013*

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries for trafficking today due to a host of factors. These are the large population of Bangladesh, chronic poverty among large groups of people, ongoing natural disasters like cyclones, tornado, river erosion, drought, flood and lack of a shelter in disaster periods. Moreover, rural-urban migration in search of work due to unemployment or natural disasters increase violence against women including the risk of being trafficked (Sarker and Panday, 2006). Bangladesh has a 4,222 kilometers long border with India covering 28 districts of Bangladesh and India as the main recipient country receive trafficked women through 20 transit points of Bangladesh Indian border (Sharmin, 2001). To understand trafficking in Bangladesh, we have to look at it both from the historical and geographical perspectives. In 1947, Indian subcontinent got the independence from British colonization and was divided in two countries named India and Pakistan. Pakistan had two regions namely East Pakistan and West Pakistan and these were geographically located 1200 miles far away from each other. At that time, Muslim families from India migrated to Pakistan and Hindus from Pakistan moved to India. From that period, there are many enclaves found in border between India and Bangladesh and India and Pakistan. These enclaves are small piece of land belonging

to a nation other than that which surrounds them. There are 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 enclaves of Bangladesh in India. Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) in their report shows that these enclaves are used to collect the survivors and they are trafficked through these enclaves easily by the traffickers (Gazi et. al, 2001). Traffickers use routes over land, air and water (BNWLA, 1997). Western border districts of Bangladesh, particularly Jessore and Khulna are widely used by traffickers. The main trafficking route is Dhaka-Mumbai-Karachi-Dubai. Many of the victims end up in Middle East nations (Faruque, 1998). In a report of Probashi (1993), it was claimed that a small number of women are taken directly by air from Bangladesh to Middle East and Europe as in Dhaka Airport corrupt officers helped issuing necessary documents. Bangladesh is thus largely a source country as far as trafficking is concerned, from which women, men and children are trafficked into different sites of employment in the destination countries.

In a study of Huda on sex trafficking in South Asia, she mentions that women and children from rural areas are trafficked to urban cities to get them involved in commercial prostitution and domestic work (IOM, 2004 in Huda, 2006). In that study of Huda it is found that at least 20,000 Bangladeshi women and children are trafficked to India and Pakistan and to Middle Eastern countries every year. Bangladesh country report (2007) showed that 50,000 Bangladeshi girls are trafficked to or through India every year as we have border with India. These two data are quite divergent from each other and cannot be relied upon to understand the situation of trafficking. Huda (2006) gives an idea that more than 14,000 Bangladeshi women are working as maids in the Gulf States and NGOs estimate the number as more than 40,000. The issue of trafficking is gaining a lot of attention in Bangladesh with studies which have been published on this issue. Bangladesh National Women's Lawyer Association (BNWLA) estimates approximately 200,000 women have been trafficked to Pakistan over last ten years and the Indian Social Welfare Board estimates that among 500,000 foreign prostitutes in India – one percent is from Bangladesh and 2.7 percent of prostitutes in Calcutta are from Bangladesh (Bangladesh CEDAW Report, 1997). The study of the Center for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) gave an information to understand the increase in the problem until 1990s the number of trafficked children was only 37, while by 1997 the number reached at 927 (Shamim, 2001). Faruque (1998) in his study mentioned more than 200,000 Bangladeshi women were trafficked from 1990 to 1997, with

6,000 children trafficked, abducted or reported missing during that time. The above mentioned studies depict various numbers of trafficked people which shows the problem of documenting trafficking as an illegal and hidden business. Generally, the documentation about trafficking in Bangladesh is poor and data are collected by individual organizations. The numbers of trafficked people documented in government reports do not also provide the information of whole country. Nevertheless, we get an understanding of the magnitude of the trafficking problem in Bangladesh from reading these sources.

### **1.2.2 NGO response to trafficking**

Bangladeshi NGOs play an important role to combat trafficking and perform responsible anti-trafficking activities all over the country. There are many NGOs in Bangladesh working against trafficking and among them BNWLA (Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association), DAM (Dhaka Ahsania Mission), CWCS (Center for Women and Children Studies), RJ (Rights Jessore), UDDIPAN, SAVIOUR are the leading NGOs (Bangladesh Country Report, 2011). They help to make people aware of trafficking, help to rescue the survivors and facilitate the retuning of survivors in Bangladesh. Then they are sent to the shelter homes and it provides physical and psychological health services. Moreover, they provide personality skill development training to these survivors to process their reintegration in family and society.

The government of Bangladesh, especially the Ministry of Home Affairs has cooperation with NGOs that helps to make the anti-trafficking activities more effective. BNWLA has been working as the pioneer organization in Bangladesh to combat trafficking against women and children. It also helped to make this the study possible and reach the informants quickly. This organization provides the survivors with legal assistance, shelter support, capacity building of survivors, repatriation, rehabilitation, psychological support, and conducts various researches on trafficking (Shamim, 2010). BNWLA repatriated 378 survivors from different states of South Asian countries and among them 144 were female and 234 were male survivors (Ali, ed., 2007). In 2011, BNWLA rescued 119 survivors and reintegrated 102 survivors. 25 survivors got the job or livelihood support from BNWLA in 2011 (Bangladesh Country Report, 2011). Moreover, they have organized many workshops to create a platform for the collaboration between government and NGOs to improve prosecution system.



CWCS is an organization that conducts various researches and promotes advocacy to combat trafficking against women. It has urged for changes in the policy to change the existing laws and government interventions. It also gives emphasis on health care services through medical treatments. It has set up health booth to provide free health services among the survivors of trafficking and many survivors' have received free health care services and medicine. It has established a specialized hotline system for trafficked and sexually exploited victims and 2200 calls have been received by four hotline mobile phones. CWCS has managed to employ 48 survivors in different garment factories for their economic well-being of survivors. Moreover, it has selected 80 youth volunteers for motivational training to involve them in the campaign of safe migration and combating human trafficking in 160 schools in Chapai Nawabganj, Cox's Bazar, Jessore and Satkhira districts (Bangladesh Country Report, 2011).

Bangladesh Country Report (2011) describes that DAM (Dhaka Ahsania Mission) has been working to prevent trafficking in women and children. DAM has the biggest shelter home for trafficked survivors. They started their shelter home services in 1998. Trafficking victims and other victims of violence are given shelter and provided psychological counseling to develop mentally and skill development training to achieve empowerment and facilitate the process of rehabilitation. Survivors also get education and vocational trainings in the shelter home. Moreover, it creates awareness among community people through networking with local NGOs and arranging workshops, drama shows, and school orientations on issues of violence against women and trafficking.

Bangladesh Country Report (2011) also mentions about another NGO named Khan Foundation has also been working to prevent trafficking and protect the human rights of women and children. They have organized 38 awareness raising campaigns and distributed many posters, leaflet and stickers to make people aware of trafficking. Rights Jessore is another NGO which has been working against trafficking through organizing workshops, community mobilization meetings, school student orientation, and folk song. They also arrange door to door awareness campaign, stage drama, and dialogue with local administration. Moreover, they have rescued many survivors, reintegrated 46 survivors in family. They provide economic support to survivors by distributing money. Rights Jessore also works to provide legal assistance to survivors, arrange

meeting with judges, lawyers and orient lawyers to sensitize them to ensure friendly prosecution process.

In addition, international NGOs (INGOs) also have been working to raise awareness among people and promote anti-trafficking activities all over the country. IOM (International Organization for Migration), UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund), and Winrock International have been working with government to prevent trafficking and to provide assistance to the survivors of trafficking. They also arrange workshops to aware people and help the survivors to get justice legally. They want to reintegrate survivors in family and society and for this they shelter the survivor and build their capacity to get reintegrated in family.

### **1.3 National and legal measures to combat trafficking in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh government has taken lots of measures to combat trafficking. It has adopted different plans with the help of NGOs to promote anti-trafficking programs. In the Country Report (2007), it is mentioned that the Government of Bangladesh has ratified the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the early 1990s that outlines the right of children and ensures the legal measures against traffickers. The government has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to protect women from violence and it also includes the violence occurred against the women in the trafficking process. Bangladesh Government has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography also that ensures the legal measures against the perpetrators. To combat trafficking in women and children, Bangladesh signed and ratified the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution in January, 2012. The convention was prepared to prevent trafficking from the South Asian countries as these countries were mostly serving as the source countries.

Bangladesh government has developed an action plan based on three mechanisms – a. prevention, b. protection, and c. prosecution. Under the prevention program one has set out to form a National Anti-Trafficking Committee. It has been formed by the government level specifically by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Prevention program also suggests for a GO-NGO

National Co-ordination Committee for Trafficking in Women and Children where the government will work as the representative in the anti-trafficking programs to combat trafficking and NGOs will provide assistance to the government.

The second mechanism- 'protection' describes the measures to be taken to rescue and recover trafficked persons. It also addresses the process of rehabilitation/reintegration of rescued and recovered persons with the help of NGOs. Moreover, the measures for the repatriation and recovery of trafficked persons have been clearly outlined. The final mechanism 'prosecution' entails the legal reformations taken by the Bangladeshi government to ensure women and children rights such as Constitutional provisions, the Penal Code with Amendments to Section 366A and 366B in 2001, the Children's Act, 1974 and the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000. Trafficking in women is a punishable offence in the Penal Code of 1860 and is addressed by the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act of 1933, The Children's Act of 1974 and the more recent Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 (amended in 2003) (Bangladesh CEDAW Report, 1997). These acts contain the penalties for trafficking in women and children with a provision for death sentence or life imprisonment. Prostitution is considered as the violation of women's human rights equal to slavery<sup>3</sup>. Das (2001) mentioned that according to article 34 (1) of Bangladesh's constitution, "all forms of forced labor are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law". Moreover, a Police Monitoring Cell was established at the Police Headquarters in 2004. It works to collect information about trafficking, takes legal action and also helps to prosecute the cases. They also work to ensure the security of survivors after reintegration. The government has also strengthened the law enforcing bodies to give traffickers proper punishment.

In addition, Bangladesh has adopted five vital mechanisms with other South Asian countries in 2004 to combat trafficking and these are - conducting better research, reinforcing protection measures through the adoption of National Action Plans, developing compatible databases of abused, exploited and trafficked children, working with NGO, UN and multilateral partners, developing indicators of impact and effectiveness, and working with children and young people to ensure their insights in policy formation and actions (Huda, 2006: 379-380).

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<sup>3</sup> Article 1 (1) of the Slavery Convention, 1926 (as amended by 1953 protocol).

## **1.4 Motivation of the study**

There is a limited number of studies focusing on women trafficked survivors and their reintegration in Bangladesh. Studies available on trafficking mostly are oriented to the causes and consequences of trafficking in Bangladesh. Some studies are conducted to change the national policy and challenge the national measures or laws regarding trafficking. Many NGOs in Bangladesh with the government support have started working on reintegration of trafficked survivors in society (Gazi et. al., 2001; Shamim, 2010; Bangladesh Country Report, 2011). However, concerns have been developed for the successful reintegration of the returnees and new laws and national measures are drawn to reduce the gap in policy (NPA, 2012).

In Bangladesh, specific studies on reintegration of women survivors cannot be found directly; rather the issue of reintegration comes out very briefly in some studies showing the challenges of reintegration due to socio-cultural norms. Bangladesh Country Report (2011) manifests the NGOs intervention program and care service to the survivors' reintegration. However, it is not possible to measure the effectiveness of anti-trafficking program or skill development program of NGOs reviewing one government report. The experience of survivors in brothel and also in reintegration process should be understood to get a detailed understanding of trafficking situation and also to develop the strategies to combat trafficking.

This study is designed to know the survivors situation after returning and their perspectives on the process of reintegration. While I was going through the trafficking literature, I could not find any specific study on the reintegration of trafficked survivors. As a Bangladeshi, I wanted to discover this unnoticed part of trafficking violence and it can be considered as the main motivation to undertake this study. This study will, however, help to understand the experience of survivors on a broader scale and will help to design the strategies to process the reintegration in Bangladesh.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

This study will describe the experiences of women and what kinds of problems or challenges are faced in the process of reintegration.

1. What are the past experiences of the women survivors who have been trafficked?
2. What are the challenges that women face in being reintegrated back into their communities?
3. What are the perceptions of family and local society towards survivors?
4. What is the role of BNWLA to reintegrate survivors in family or community?

## **1.6 Organization of the thesis**

The remaining part of this study on reintegration of trafficked survivors is designed in the following way: chapter 2 depicts the literature on trafficking including state of trafficking globally and nationally, purpose and factors for trafficking, studies on reintegration as well as contribution of the study. The theoretical framework describes two theories namely theory of empowerment and social stigma theory and these are presented in chapter 3. Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology that depicts how this study has been conducted with the explanation of what methodology has been applied, what methods have been used to collect data and how data has been analyzed.

The empirical findings are presented in chapter 5, chapter 6, chapter 7 and chapter 8 respectively. Chapter 5 reveals the process of trafficking, routes of trafficking, experience of survivors in brothel, impact on their health, the rescue process and their transfer to Indian shelter home. Chapter 6 discusses the survivors life in BNWLA shelter home covering the assistance given by shelter home to survivors like psychological counseling, skill development training and facilitate their reintegration in family. Chapter 7 illustrates the role of BNWLA to the survivors' reintegration and the perception of family members and community people toward survivors. This chapter identifies the stigma and social discrimination that survivors face in community. Chapter 8 is about the challenges that survivors face after their reintegration in society. It also gives the idea of survivor's coping mechanism to deal with stigma and discrimination. The last chapter i.e. chapter 9 summarizes the main findings and suggests some recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING AND RESEARCHING TRAFFICKING

This chapter is intended to outline the literature on trafficking issues from global, regional and Bangladeshi context, however, the main focus is on Bangladesh. This chapter will help to understand the purpose and reasons for trafficking and its impact on survivors. The last section will depict the studies dealing with reintegration process and the contribution of this study.

### 2.1 Purpose and factors influence trafficking

Several studies on trafficking in women and children in South Asia have been conducted. Trafficking in women occurred for various purposes but prostitution is one of the main reasons why women are trafficked. Penttinen (2000) says that globalization is not only increasing the marginalization but also the chance to get involved in international prostitution. The factors influence trafficking are categorized in two groups. One is ‘push factor’ that includes the conditions to traffic people from one country to another country. Another group is ‘pull factor’ and it supports the demand of trafficked people. Push factors are known as poverty, low per capita income, lack of employment, lack of education, lack of awareness, family structure, easy divorce, dream of better living, large family size, over population, inadequate, insufficient and corrupted law enforcement authority (BNWLA, UNICEF, 1997: 10). Push factors work strongly to motivate women to migrate in cities or abroad to change own situation. The same study described the pull factors as urbanization, industrialization, migration, tourism and development of road links. Again, deception, misrepresentation, exploitation, force, coercion are often used as the means for trafficking (Bangladesh Country Report, 2007). These factors create the demand for women and push factors help to supply women all over the world for sexual exploitation.

Das (2001) in his study, *Women Trafficking in South Asia: Legal Responses and Strategies of Selected Countries* explained the scenario of trafficking situation in Bangladesh. He mentioned that the causes that are responsible for trafficking in Bangladesh are poverty, existing socio-cultural and religious attitudes, lack of awareness and rapid globalization of consumer culture etc. He also pointed out that the socio-economic situation of Bangladesh creates the vulnerability of women to exploitation. Due to the poverty, they are lured into trafficking by promise of job or marriage. Gazi et. al. (2001) also points out in the article *Trafficking of Women and Children in*

*Bangladesh: an overview* that poverty, attitudes towards women and deeply entrenched gender discrimination, unemployment, cultural norms about marriage, well-organized national and international networks of traffickers and weak law-enforcing agencies are critical factors relating to trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh. Due to the poverty and lack of opportunities women may fall into the vulnerable state. Gender dimension is an important issue that influences the trafficking in Bangladesh. The women of Bangladesh possess lower status in terms of education, employment, health and nutrition and face violence in family, society or workplaces (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2010). The extent of poverty influence women's lower status and they are considered as a burden in the family. Women's mobility is restricted due to the social norms and lack of security. Moreover, they have very limited power to take decision about their life, marriage, employment or political participation. Early marriage occurs in village areas as parents have to pay less dowry in marriage if girls are 13-15 years old. World Bank report (2007) points out that "the practice of dowry, a lower age at marriage, and poverty all are associated with women's higher likelihood of experiencing and condoning violence" (in UNICEF Bangladesh, 2010).

Lots of studies have found that high percentage of trafficked women belong to the lower income groups i.e. poverty increases the risk of being trafficked (Mukherjee and Das, 1996; Warburton and Maria, 1996; UNDP, 2002; Nair, 2004). Lack of education is a fact that enforces trafficking among the poor people. UNICEF conducted a survey at 10 villages of the country. 55 percent of the trafficked women belonged to the 17-24 age group while 25 percent were aged between 25 and 32, and 95 percent of the age groups were illiterate (Bangladesh Country Paper, 2004). Moreover, natural disasters like cyclone, flood, river erosion, drought and earthquake makes lots of women and children not only homeless but also powerless and moneyless. This factor can influence the trafficking of women and children. Young girls are enticed by false love of traffickers who pretend to be in love with them or make promise to get married (INCIDIN Bangladesh and ILO, 2002; Hossain, 2007). In this regard, Nair (2004) argued that,

*"A dysfunctional home environment- break-up of the family, marital discord, physical abuse, sexual abuse, drug use, family pressures, large families, families facing uncertain times, children in substitute care, gender discrimination within the family, desertion by husbands, husbands*

*acquiring a second or a third wife- makes people vulnerable to trafficking” ( in Shamim, 2010: 27).*

Karmakar (2001) mentioned that most trafficked women were unmarried, divorced, separated or widowed. Many women migrate voluntarily and end up being trafficked but this does not mean that she has been trafficked with her consent (GATTW, 2001). Women and girls are lured with a false promise of well paid jobs or marriage and are trafficked into prostitution. Shamim (2010) mentioned two patterns of trafficking in her study. The first pattern is called “two step” pattern that targets the women already involved in prostitution to be trafficked abroad, for example, sex workers from local brothel or street sex workers. The second pattern is the quite dangerous “one step” pattern that targets the women or girls from village homes to be trafficked for prostitution abroad. Girls or women who are mostly virgin or sexually not active are targeted from the villages to be sold in abroad. The one step pattern is more prevalent and popular among the customers as these girls have not been infected by HIV/AIDS. Moreover, one step pattern girls can attract the customers more as customers always look for ‘fresh bodies’ (UNDP, 2002).

Women from poor families try to reduce the economic burden of their family and migrate to cities to support the family but may get trapped in international prostitution. Trafficking in women for purposes of prostitution is a common example which follows the trend of sexual exploitation through objectification and commodification of women in the global capitalist world. Bangladesh has been marked by its role as "sending" country or country of origin. Traffickers lure the women and girl for a better life abroad and manipulate them for migration (Esquibel, 2005) and poor women get into the trap of trafficking by agents who are involved in facilitating trafficking. The growing demand, worldwide, for trafficked women and children for sex tourism, cheap sweatshop labour, and domestic work is also one of the reasons for rise in the trafficking. Prostitution is legal or tolerated in many countries, and widespread in most of the countries. Studies found that promise of better job by traffickers, promise of marriage worked to increase the number of trafficking in Bangladesh (Sanghera, 1999; Hossain and Al Faruque, 2007; INCIDIN Bangladesh and ILO, 2002; Gazi et.al., 2001). Poor law enforcement and corruption in Bangladesh also work as factors that help to increase the number of trafficking incidents. There is no reliable estimate of women and children who have been trafficked from Bangladesh to other countries. Rescue of the trafficked victims has its limitations and



unacceptability, largely due to the attitude and violent behavior of the law-enforcing agencies (Gazi et.al., 2001, Shamim, 2001). Although the police rescue many women and children, what happens to them after they have been rescued is largely unknown. Most are unable to go back to their home because of a whole series of problems, and when they are released, they are again at risk of being picked up by the traffickers. Of particular interest to me is to find out the status of survivors reintegration and to understand the process of reintegration of trafficked returnees in own family and community.

## **2.2 Impact of trafficking**

Trafficking has a major impact on health and socio-economic life of a survivor. Violence is closely connected to prostitution. In a study of Nepalese women trafficked for prostitution in India's brothels, Human Rights Watch/Asia documents that *"most girls and women start out in these cheap brothels where they are 'broken in' through a process of rapes and beatings"*(Human Rights Watch/Asia, 1995: 34). While working as a prostitute, they experience several health impacts like anxiety, insomnia, depression, traumatic stress or disorder that weaken their self confidence and self power to live a normal life. The living condition of prostitutes in brothel leads them to get infected with diseases (see more in chapter 5). Lives in brothels often harm the survivors' physically and psychologically and damage their reproductive organs and increase the risk of other communicable diseases (TIP, 2004). Moreover, transmission of HIV/AIDS endangers women's lives and social status. It works as a major form of violence against women.

Women who are rescued and are reintegrated in society often experience social stigma due to their involvement in prostitution. They are ostracized in society and it creates the possibility of survivors to get involved in crime. They are more likely to get involved in smuggling of drug or illegal prostitution (TIP, 2004). The abuse survivors face through the reintegration process complicates their psychological and physical rehabilitation or reintegration in family or society. Trafficking in women for prostitution has various impacts on women's lives. Specifically, survivors go through health problems, social exclusion due to stigma and economic problems also.

### **2.3 Studies on reintegration**

Reintegration of survivors means amalgamate them within the existing society. This will involve achieving social acceptance and the reclaiming of dignity for women (Gazi et al, 2001). Crawford and Kaufman's (2008) study on sex trafficking in Nepal states that reintegration program was positive as many survivors went back to families. Many started economic activities and got married also. The reason for this success was the intervention of NGOs that made people aware of trafficking. However, they mentioned that due to the extreme stigma, NGOs reintegration program faced challenges. Income generating activities gave women a foundation to live an independent life but stigma was also persisting.

Chaulagai (2009) in his exploratory study of trafficked women's experiences and perceptions towards their reintegration had pointed out the almost same view in a broader level. His study illustrated that reintegration of trafficked survivors in Nepali community was challenging as prostitution was considered as shameful work. He presented the various understanding of trafficking among different categories of people. He found that the community people and family members stigmatized the survivors. He also pointed out that economic independence can work as a solution for the successful reintegration of survivors.

Bangladesh Country Report (2007) gives an idea about the reintegration under the protection mechanism. It says that care to the trafficked survivors is given to recover them from psychological trauma, to make them feel important, to never leave them without care or attention. The Deputy Commissioners (DCs), Superintendents of Police (SPs), the Officers in Charge of Police Stations (OCs), representatives of NGOs and different committees at various administrative units are involved in the monitoring of rescue, repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration according to government instruction. Their duty is to monitor the condition of reintegrated survivors and to make report to government. However, the achievement is still not satisfactory.

Studies specifically focusing on reintegration of survivors in Bangladeshi society are difficult to find. Gazi, et. al. (2001) in his study about trafficking situation in Bangladesh described the challenges of reintegration of trafficked survivors in family and society. The prevalence of stigma is common due to the cultural and religious norms in Bangladesh. This article illustrates

very briefly the issue of reintegration and the focus was mainly on the causes and consequences of trafficking.

The reintegration issue has got the spotlight of concern recently and Shamim (2010) in her book, *State of Trafficking in Women and Children and their Sexual Exploitation in Bangladesh* mentions about the state of trafficking with special focus on reintegration of survivors in Bangladesh. She believes the most affected area now to be researched is the process of reintegration and attention to health risk of survivors. She has been working since the 90s with trafficking issues and this book for the first time discussed the reintegration of survivors clearly and broadly. She outlines the need for effective reintegration programs to motivate survivors psychologically to pursue a normal life.

In addition, Bangladesh country report (2011) on trafficking issues has also focused on reintegration program for survivors. In this report, the state of trafficking has come out elaborately with the information about GO-NGO collaboration for effective anti-trafficking program. Moreover, national measures have been described to combat trafficking. The formation of policies also has been depicted with national laws to understand the prosecution program. This report also presents the activities of leading NGOs for survivors' reintegration. It has been found that all the NGOs have been working to create the collaboration with Indian police or organizations to rescue women and process their returning to Bangladesh. Moreover, they have referred the survivors to the shelter home where physical and psychological health services were provided. The report outlines the successful reintegration of survivors in family and what have been done to empower them economically. Though the issue of reintegration in Bangladesh is a bit new, it is getting concern from the government level also.

## **2.4 Contribution of the study**

This study aims to contribute to the literature on trafficking issues by exploring the experience of survivors, which has not come out in any Bangladeshi literature elaborately. To do so, this research also discusses the factors leading to trafficking. Most of the studies concentrate on the state of trafficking with focus on the causes, numbers of trafficked person, infection of STDs or HIV/AIDS or policy implementation. Bangladesh works as the source country and many survivors return to Bangladesh after working as a prostitute in Indian brothel. There is a need to

identify their problems of rehabilitation or reintegration in society. The literature is not good enough to understand their experiences in brothel or in Bangladeshi shelter home after being rescued or after reintegration within family. This research intends to add knowledge about these overlooked issues to understand their needs with the help of social theories applicable to explain their life experiences. Moreover, this study shows the activities of one NGO and aims to contribute to understand women's need and take measures according to their needs. Service providers, law enforcement bodies, donor agencies can be more strategic to combat trafficking by knowing the view of survivors and also community people. This study may help to identify the success of NGOs and can create a new concern to the reintegration of trafficked survivors.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study on the reintegration of women trafficked survivors in Bangladesh relies on two sets of theories namely theories on empowerment and stigma theory. These theories guided the study as they are well suited to analyze the findings. Understanding empowerment is really important to explore the experience of survivors' powerless situation and their reintegration process. Empowerment theory of Kabeer (1999) is outlined to understand the possible meaning of empowerment and how it can be achieved by survivors. Mosedale (2003) and Sadan's (2004) ideas of empowerment also shed a broader light on the idea of powerlessness or disempowerment that made women survivors vulnerable to the traffickers, abused and marginalized in society. Soloman (1976) and Saleebey (2006) explain empowerment in a way that describes how to get back the strength, cope with the situation and regain the power from a powerless state. To complement this perspective the study of Gutierrez, DeLois & GlenMaye (1995) talks about the intervention programs that work as mechanisms to initiate the empowerment process of survivors.

This research also uses stigma theory based on Goffman (1963), which is intended to show how stigma get attached to people and the consequences they face due to the stigma. In addition to Goffman's work, Major and O'Brien's (2005) and Heatherton's (et al., 2000) studies are used to show how stigma influence the 'self' or identity of survivors. This research also brings in Link and Phelan's (2001) study to describe the process of stigmatization. Scambler and Paoli's (2008) study has been used to understand different forms of stigma.

### 3.1 Empowerment theory

The concept empowerment is defined in many ways; however the word 'power' defines the meaning of empowerment. According to Kabeer (2005) power can be understood in terms of the ability to make choice. Empowerment is the process of giving the powerless the 'power' to make choices or change own situation. *"To be disempowered means to be denied choice, while empowerment refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability"* (p. 13). Mosedale (2003) also outlined the concept by giving four aspects of empowerment. She said *"to be empowered one must have been disempowered... empowerment cannot be bestowed by a third party...definitions of empowerment*

usually include a sense of people making decisions on matters which are important in their lives and being able to carry them out...moreover, empowerment is an ongoing process rather than a product” (p. 3). However, I conceptualized empowerment as a process of gaining the ability to make choices or decisions to control the situation and achieve the changes for positive development. Also, to analyze this study, two important pillars of empowerment - the state of powerlessness and getting back strength through interventions are discussed below.

### **3.1.1 Powerlessness**

Empowerment is a process that transforms the state of powerlessness to a state of having control over life, choice and environment (Sadan, 2004). Powerlessness derives from the inability of having control of one’s body and situation and getting oppressed physically and psychologically. Mosedale (2003) also mentions that *“to be empowered one must have been disempowered”* (3). People in a powerless situation often lack self esteem, have an inclination to self blame, prefer to live isolated from the community people.

Solomon (1976) mentions that powerless people often develop adaptive mechanisms which are merely separating themselves, blaming themselves for the situation and accepting society’s judgment about their insignificance and worthlessness. They accept those social norms that make them separated from other people. The situation creates a sense in them that they cannot go against the oppression or injustice but have to accept others blame and consider themselves as the guilty one. Powerlessness is not only the situation that deprives people from achieving the ability to gain power against the social discrimination but also a state that makes them vulnerable to new forms of oppression.

### **3.1.2 Kabeer’s empowerment components - agency, resource, and achievement**

Kabeer explains that *“empowerment...refers to the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability”* (Kabeer 1999; 437). Kabeer argues that three interrelated components help to develop subordinate or discriminated groups’ ability to make choices -resources, agency and achievements. Agency is the ability of individuals to define one’s goals and being able to act to achieve those goals. Agency can also involve *“bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance”* (Kabeer 1999; 438). The Non zero-sum models of power by Mosedale gives an idea of ‘power within’

that is similar to the meaning of agency. Power within, “refers to assets such as self-esteem and self-confidence” (Mosedale, 2003: 6). It means developing the sense of power in a person to get over the discrimination or stigma. Resources are a medium that helps to exercise the power. Different institutions like family, community and organizations may be used as resource to gain agency. Achievement is the outcome of agency and resources that bring positive results. By using agency and resources, achievement is made to increase the ability and power of an individual (Kabeer, 1999). Kabeer’s theory of empowerment helps me to analyze the development of trafficked survivors’ agency and resources to achieve empowerment. Her approach gives me a direction to understand the development of survivors’ agency and success of resource implementation to achieve empowerment.

### **3.1.2 Possible interventions**

Following the concept of powerlessness, Saleebey’s (2006) strength perspective can be used to get the idea of possible interventions that help the powerless group to use hidden capacities and increase ability to get the strength. The strengths perspective, then, is about “*uncovering, naming, embellishing, and celebrating abilities, talents, and aspirations in the service of desired change*” (Weick & Saleebey, 1995 in Saleebey 2006: 128). Through this process people from a particular stigmatized group talk about their survival with stigma. The people who have faced negative situations by being blamed by others and socially are segregated or experience self stigma also know what is right for them at some level. “*The work of the strength’s approach is the work of empowerment—helping individuals, families, and communities to see and utilize their capacities; recognize the options open to them; understand the barriers and scarcities they may face; surface their hopes and aspirations; and align them with their inner and outer resources to improve the quality of their lives*” (Cowger, 1994; Rapp, 1998; Saleebey, 1997 in Saleebey, 2006: 127-128).

Strength perspective can be understood by “*the narratives and stories that clients bring to us and share with us that allow us to discover who they are, what they know, what virtues they possess, what troubles they have faced, and what dreams they have* (Hoyt, 1996 in Saleebey, 2006: 134). The goal of empowerment is to make individuals able to over-come barriers that creates obstacle for their self-fulfillment. The strength perspective is a mechanism that is used by the professionals for interventions among the powerless group. This group can share their

experience of survival, thus at the same time can form new hopes and aspirations to improve their lives.

To explain empowerment processes in a better way three processes can be analyzed that are closely connected with each other. Sadan (2004) mentions about the three processes named individual empowerment, community empowerment and empowering professional practice. The process of *individual empowerment* is very important as it develops a sense of change among individuals. *Community empowerment* means the changes in community people to be able to reduce the social stigma and discrimination. It can be developed with the responsibility to care for the collective concern and giving priority to all community individuals equally. Empowering *professional practice* is a process that helps to change the community people for the betterment and encourage individual to gain control over their life and be able to solve their own problem. These three processes are interlinked and help to understand the powerless situation and also the mechanism of empowerment. Sadan's three component of empowerment partially is similar with Kabeer's three components to achieve empowerment. However, the query comes whether these processes of individual empowerment, community empowerment or professional practice can actually bring any change in people's life or not.

Empowerment can be understood by the capacity development and power of specific groups like women, ethnic minority group, and stigmatized people to fight against inequality and to achieve the empowerment. "*Empowerment is a process that can take place on the individual, interpersonal, and community levels of intervention. It consists of the following subprocesses: development of group consciousness, reduction of self-blame, assumption of personal responsibility for change, and enhancement of self-efficacy*" (Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye 1995: 535). Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye (1995) also mention that empowerment entails intervention methods that include the growing trust, power, identification of client's strengths, raising their consciousness and teaching skills. It helps to develop powerless group's mutual aid, support and the growing sense of personal power. They also say that effective empowerment does not prescribe coping or an adaptation mechanisms rather develops the sense of power to prevent the problems created by other people or community. It means that the concern is to make people confident and be able to fight back the injustice. They also mentioned that achievement of empowerment can be measured using five components- control, confidence, power, choice, and



autonomy. *Control* is the ability to have control over one's life. *Confidence* can be termed as the ability to take risks and precisely "feeling confident as the opposite of experiencing oneself as a victim" (Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye 1995: 537). *Power* means having the ability to influence one's situation. On the other hand *choice* means getting aware about option and develops the means to exercise that. Finally *autonomy* is the sense of independence that helps to generate self power.

In my thesis the theory of empowerment plays a crucial role to analyze the survivors' powerless situation to get trafficked and to get involved in prostitution. It also helps to analyze the survivor's tendency of self blame, physical and psychological distress, distorted identity to the development of agency, and individual empowerment. Empowerment theory may be helpful to analyze the powerless state of survivors. It will also help to understand the development of agency of survivors through the exercise of resource to achieve success in reintegration in family. The concept of professional interventions can be helpful to analyze the survivors' development of agency and coping mechanism with the situation. However, this research will also manifest the limitation of intervention programs or resources in the reintegration program. The five components described by Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye (1995) help to analyze the NGOs interventions. Their ideas have been used in this research to see how the intervention programs impacted on trafficked survivors' lives.

### **3.2 Stigma theory:**

Social stigma is a sign that separates people in a particular group that is shameful, unusual, or unaccepted according to social norms. Goffman (1963:3), in his classic formulation, defines stigma as "*an attribute that is deeply discrediting*" and proposes that the stigmatized person is reduced "*from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one*". Goffman (1963:4) views processes of social construction as central; he describes stigma as "*a special kind of relationship between an attribute and a stereotype*" and avers that stigma is embedded in a "*language of relationships*" (p. 3). It results in social exclusion and discrimination of an individual. Stigma can result from particular characteristics like physical deformity or can be generated from negative attitudes towards the behaviors of a group like prostitutes or homosexuals and these groups may be linked to "*undesirable characteristics*" (p. 17).

### 3.2.1 Goffman's three perspective of stigma

Goffman (1963) discusses stigma in relation to social relationships where an individual is avoided or socially excluded. According to Goffman (1963), there exist three different types of stigma that limits the life chances of stigmatized people. The first type of stigma is about the disgrace of the body due to physical inefficiencies like deafness or dumbness. These are considered as an obstacle for social acceptance. The second one is related with aspects of a person's character that is not accepted by society like mental disorders, drug addiction and so on. The third type of stigma is based on the race, nation, religion and all the family members can be contaminated by that equally with the stigmatized one (Goffman, 1963). This form of stigma flows from the individual to the family members and they may also become rejected in society. In my study, Goffman's three perspective of stigma fits well as from the community people's perspective survivors lack purity which is a physical deficiency and the tag of prostitute can be considered as a form of weak character. Lastly, the family members are also contaminated and the social status of the whole family is hampered.

### 3.2.2 Sense of shame and impact on identity formation

Major and O'Brien (2005) denote the stereotypical behavior of community people to the stigmatized people and the threat to self identity. They also mention *"by limiting access to important life domains, discrimination directly affects the social status, psychological well-being, and physical health of the stigmatized"* (396). Another study also claim that stigma and rejection devalue peoples self-esteem, reduce their self respect, self worth and it ultimately leads to the loss of identity (Heatherton et al., 2000). The same way survivors lack the self esteem and confidence and being labeled as a prostitute lead to the loss of identity. Link and Phelan (2001) describe the processes of stigmatization that include labeling human being as stigmatized, stereotyping them, and categorizing them in a separate group. By this the stigmatized people experience of status loss and discrimination. They have to adjust with the situation and become able to live with stigma. Scambler and Paoli (2008) distinguish between enacted stigma and felt stigma. Enacted stigma means *'discrimination by others on grounds of 'being imperfect'* (in Scambler, 2009: 451). Felt stigma means *'internalized sense of shame and immobilizing anticipation of enacted stigma'* (in Scambler, 2009: 451). It means that enacted stigma is the

experience of being recognized as imperfect and different from other normal people. Felt stigma is the sense of shame that may be caused as a result of experiencing the enacted stigma. However, felt stigma can be developed without enacted stigma as it can be developed among the people who have not experienced blame from others rather they have developed an internal sense of shame.

Survivors' of trafficking lack normal social interactions with others and are considered as having violated cultural norms. As prostitution is considered as a shameful work, survivors' who worked as prostitutes are considered as different or not like normal women. Stigma theory denotes how stigma is imposed on people by others and shame can create the self stigma that exclude or discriminate people as a "special group" in society.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the guideline or system of methods used to conduct the research and methods are the technique to accomplish the collection of information. I have followed a qualitative research methodology to conduct my study as qualitative research investigates the reasons behind the problem. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research interprets the phenomena in their natural setting something which gives a sense of the situation or context of problem. Patton (2002) defined qualitative research as a process to understand the interactions to find out the in depth reasons of the issues that informants bring in a particular situation. In this chapter, firstly, I will discuss the methods of data collection, procedures of collecting data, secondly, the ethical issues and challenges and at last the data analysis process.

### 4.1 Study settings

This study is a purposive study and I have focused on the survivors experience and the challenges they face in their reintegration. I also tried to find some background information about trafficking and the current state of trafficking. My initial idea was to do research with two NGOs who are working with survivor's reintegration. Unfortunately I could not get access to more than one of these NGOs and I, thus, ended up working only with BNWLA<sup>4</sup> (Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers Association). I also visited one more organization; the Centre for Women and Children Studies<sup>5</sup> to get insights into the media coverage and talk to experts (Media coverage here means the reports published in newspapers during the last few years Center for Women and Children studies (CWCS) has filed up all news serially according to year and month).

Working with BNWLA was a good experience as they responded positively after my application urging for their help. I applied to the President of BNWLA stating my research area, prospects of my study and ethical issues that I would pay attention to. I also submitted one recommendation letter from my supervisor as a requirement of BNWLA. They called me after two days and informed me that my application had been processed with permission. I went to the office the very next day and started working. I had to describe my project plan to all staff members

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.bnwlabd.org/bnwla-profile/>

<sup>5</sup> They are working extensively on trafficking issue. <http://cwcs.artisteer.net/>

individually who helped to collect data. The coordinator of Dhaka office told the shelter in charge and reintegration officer to select the survivors and give me the necessary information. Due to some rules and regulations, I could not collect their publications, only the numbers of women they have rescued in last few years.

BNWLA has two large shelter homes in Dhaka (capital) and in Jessore (most at risk district). Most often the survivors come to the Dhaka office from India. The Dhaka office communicates with Jessore office to find out the survivors' parents and home address. Survivors who are from Khulna division or from nearby division are sent to Jessore shelter home and the rest of the survivors stay in Dhaka shelter home until their parents or family members come to take them back at home. According to BNWLA program officer, it takes long time to find out the address of the girls sometime as survivors cannot give the details address due to their lack of knowledge and illiteracy. The shelter home provides shelter up to two years if the girls do not want to go back to their family and BNWLA arranges housing after that for the survivors in Dhaka or Jessore and helps them to find a job. I talked to survivors from both shelter homes. I was not allowed to visit the shelter home to maintain the rules and regulations of BNWLA. It was strictly restricted for the visitors to get access to shelter home. The shelter home in charge explained me properly that the survivors were not comfortable with the visit of visits of strangers in shelter home and new survivors could feel more vulnerable psychologically after such visits. BNWLA provides lots of psychological counseling to recover the trauma and frequent visits or interviewing can destroy the whole development process. Shelter in charge selected the girls randomly but asked for the consent to give an interview. The girls came voluntarily at the BNWLA office (both in Dhaka and Jessore). Shelter in charge was sitting in another place and she did not mention about any specific rules that I had to follow while interviewing. As part of my research, I wanted to know more about the reintegration process of survivors in family or society. To get the information about this, the program coordinator of the Dhaka office advised me to visit Jessore office to meet some survivors living with parents and also talk to the community people.

BNWLA has a branch office in Jessore<sup>6</sup> (at most risk of trafficking) which runs a whole anti trafficking programs in Khulna division<sup>7</sup> and Jessore is at most risk of trafficking. I decided to

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<sup>6</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jessore\\_District](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jessore_District)

visit Jessore office to get the picture of reintegration process which was not possible to collect living in Dhaka. Jessore is far away from Dhaka and I went to Jessore office twice to visit the field and observe the activities of BNWLA regional office. The program coordinator of Dhaka office also went to Jessore office the same day I arrived. I made an appointment with her appointment earlier and met her in Jessore office. She instructed the program officer to provide me the address of survivors living in villages with parents or living in town on their own. The staffs gave me the address of the villages and I had to find the place myself. Program officer also communicated with the survivor through cell phone and prepared them mentally about my arrival at their place. He did not select survivors living far away from Jessore town. He arranged the interview with the survivors living in short distances though it took two hours bus drive to visit two villages. I went to these villages named *Jhumjhumpur, Cachra, Baghachra, Fultolato* find the survivors and their family members.

I wanted to not only find out women's experience or challenges but also the current state of trafficking. Through different methods I collected information from various groups to understand the current state of the problem and activities going on to reintegrate the survivors.

## **4.2 Sources of data**

This study followed a qualitative approach to collect the data for both primary and secondary sources.

### **Target groups of primary sources of information**

I interviewed the following people to get primary information and I also conducted focus group discussion among the community people. Survivors were the main informants to understand the experience of trafficking and rest of the people helped to discover the reintegration process of survivors.

- i. Trafficked survivors who were rescued by BNWLA and are staying in shelter home.
- ii. Trafficked survivors who are living with family or outside the family.
- iii. Family members of survivors.
- iv. BNWLA staff.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khulna\\_Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khulna_Division)

- v. Shelter home in-charge of Dhaka shelter home
- vi. One lawyer
- vii. Community people
- viii. One expert working with trafficking issues.

### **Secondary sources of information**

Secondary sources for this study were collected in the form of books, reports, research studies, newspaper articles, document available in the internet, government country reports, and NGOs newsletters. To get updated information about the trafficking situation in Bangladesh, I have collected newspaper reports on missing women, kidnapped women and trafficked women of last few years.

I have also collected six case studies from BNWLA and Centre for women and children studies files as I could interview only 12 survivors. I wanted to understand the facts behind trafficking and get the idea of ways to reintegration. I have collected these cases from secondary sources to get a more clear idea about the background information; however, I did not use those cases in my research.

### **4.3 Methods of data collection**

Qualitative approach which is used in social science research gives knowledge about human being's experience, attitudes, motivation, behavior, in a particular context. Research methods are the techniques to collect data to fulfill the research objective. To collect the information, in-depth interview, focus group discussion and case study methods help a lot with descriptive understandings of the problems.

#### **4.3.1 In-depth interview**

Kvale (1996) stated "*The research interview is an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest*" (p. 125). He also stated that interview is a form of human interaction which may develop the knowledge of both researcher and informants about the research subject and builds an environment of trust. Millar and Crabtree (1999) described that when using qualitative interviews, the research questions are designed for gathering data from a relatively homogenous group who live in same context and share

experiences. In my study, in depth interview method was one of the key methods to find out the experience and challenges towards the survivors reintegration. This study sought detailed information about survivor's background, what they have gone through and how they are adjusting with family, society members after coming back. In depth interview served my purpose to elicit the information that I needed to conduct this study.

I interviewed 12 survivors who were trafficked to India and came back to Bangladesh with the help of BNWLA. These survivors were rescued by Indian NGOs and human rights organizations which communicated with BNWLA to help them return to Bangladesh. BNWLA helped me a lot to approach these women and interview them. I noted down some general information about them, (age, education, marital status) with their consent and then moved on to discuss other topics with them. Each interview lasted for almost one hour or more.

I have interviewed only those survivors who were rescued from brothel and were involved in prostitution. The following table gives the idea about the survivors' background –

Table 1: General information about survivors

Age	Marital status	Education			Length of stay in abroad	
		Illiterate	Simply literate	Primary	less than 2 years	2-5 years
18-20	0	0	1	4	1	4
21-25	2	2	3	0	0	5
26-30	2	0	2	0	0	2

Source: field survey, 2012

*The table shows that the level of education rate is also very poor among these survivors. Four of them cannot copy the name even and rest of the informants could copy the name. All of them were trafficked to Calcutta first through the Jessore border (illegally) and then distributed to Bombay, Pune, and Madras. In total, they stayed for a long time in India including the time period in brothel and in the Indian shelter home after rescue. Only one girl escaped early. She*



*was rescued by police after three months and stayed in an Indian shelter home for one and half year. Later on she came back with other survivors to Bangladesh.*

I interviewed three women living in the Dhaka shelter home and another three women living in Jessore shelter home and six women living with their family or outside the family on their own in Jessore town. I talked to three survivors who were living with families, of them one was HIV positive. The HIV positive girl came to the BNWLA Jessore office to collect medicine with her mother and I talked to both of them. Three survivors were working in garment and manufacturing factories in Jessore and I visited their family during the weekend. I went to meet those working survivors at their village home on the weekend. I could not visit the shelter home due to the above mentioned restrictions and women living in shelter home came to meet me at BNWLA office. I interviewed the women individually in a corridor as the office was small and no room was empty. I explained them about my research, my purpose and possible benefits. Before starting the conversation, I asked all of them for the consent to allow me recording but only four women allowed me to do this. I informed them about the confidentiality but some of them were scared of having their voice recorded. They shared the information about the experience but did not want to leave any evidence. I took the notes of important answers relevant to my research questions as copying each line was not possible.

Most of my research participants spoke in a mixture of Hindi (Indian Language) and Bengali. They were comfortable to speak in Hindi as this hindered other people to understand. India is a neighbor country of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi people watch their movies, drama through satellite. I developed my knowledge of Hindi by watching television programs from my childhood. I can speak and understand Hindi but cannot write or read. We were talking in a quiet place, sometimes people came in the corridor and my informant started speaking in Hindi. They described about their experience in brothel, their knowledge of legal aspects of trafficking, the progress of their case, life in shelter home and the trainings they have got. They all were rescued from different brothels and have gone through physical checkup to spot HIV and other STDs. Survivors living with parents or working in cities told me about their social life, working feasibility and difficulties, and some shared their viewpoints on the work of the NGOs.

I also interviewed parents of the survivors and talked to three mothers and three fathers. One mother and two fathers were in the situation that they were waiting for their daughters who were

rescued by the police and were in the process of coming back to Bangladesh. I also talked to one brother of a survivor and her sister in law in absence of parents. Talking with the parents was the most difficult part of my data collection process. The parents who were waiting for their daughter were crying continuously and requested me to accelerate the process of returning of their daughters. They hold my hand strongly with hope and I silently was observing the pain of parents who had no money, lost their daughters and also lost the dignity in society.

#### **4.3.2 Interview with Gate keepers and key persons**

To understand the trafficking program and approaches taken to combat trafficking, I interviewed three NGO staffs, and one lawyer. NGO staffs gave me a broader idea about the project, funding, length, ways to negotiate with Indian NGOs, procedures of returning and approaches to reintegration. The lawyer described the situation of trafficking cases, success and limitations of trafficking cases. Interview with one shelter home employee gave me an idea about the life in the shelter home as I was not allowed to visit the home. I wanted to get the detailed information about food, entertainment, education facility and skill development training in shelter home. I also had a discussion with an expert who had worked with government level staff and also with NGO staff. She outlined the prospects of anti trafficking program, measures taken in many NGOs and its implications for survivors and the process of their reintegration.

#### **4.3.3 Focus group discussion:**

The focus group method can be understood as a flexible discussion with a group of people gathered together for the objective of study which is guided by the researcher. It is also known as a group discussion as it addresses the group rather concentrating on specific members (Krueger, 1988). With the help of BNWLA staff, I had conducted two focus group discussions in two villages. I interviewed men and women separately and each group was consisted of six persons.

I wanted to know the feelings and perception of those people who have not been through such problem with their girls, sisters or daughters. I conducted the discussion and also recorded the FGD with men. Two or three persons in each group were vocal and rest of them were silent or seconding others speech. The FGD's lasted approximately for 45 minutes. It was interesting to get different views as some were very strict about social stigma and some were carrying liberal views about the reintegration. Women were little bit shy to talk about this issue and mostly

carried the same thoughts like men about stigma. Both groups responded positively by informing their views about the stigmatization and reunification in family or society.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

The data was collected using qualitative research methods namely in depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion. I developed an interview guide to conduct the interviews. According to Merriam (2009), data analysis provides the answer to the specific research questions in a qualitative study. Adhikari (2011) mentions that “*qualitative data analysis is a process of searching patterns and relationships in the data by comparing individuals’ stories and experiences*” (p. 35). This helps to combine the information, reduce unnecessary interpretation that has been found while doing fieldwork.

This study uses thematic analysis and interpretation that help to define the theme of raw data, breaking them into small units and analyze those categorized themes with the help of theories. Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) understanding of steps of analysis namely ‘open coding’, axial coding’ and ‘selective coding’ have been used to analyze the data of this study. I have studied the interview transcripts, field notes and documents and on the basis of the themes of interview guide I could primarily set the categories/themes. Generating indicators to answer the relevant question is called coding (Merriam, 2009).

The early stage of analysis is called as *open coding*. Open coding helps the researcher to compare data and ask questions about what is and what is not understood (Kolb, 2012). To analyze the data of trafficked survivors’ reintegration, I have categorized four broad topics for analysis on the basis of interview guide: i) Understanding the state of women trafficking in Bangladesh; ii) Experiences of survivors in brothel; iii) Life of survivors in shelter home; iv) Challenges of survivors’ reintegration in society. This coding has played an important role to sort out the data from huge pool of information in the transcripts, field notes and documents and also to deal with the information that fits in specific categories. In open coding different categories are identified and they act like sub categories reflecting the condition of main category. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) this process of relating categories to sub categories is considered as axial coding. For example, in relation to understand the main category about experiences of survivors in brothel, some other subcategories like involvement in prostitution,

physical and psychological health impacts and rescue process have been discussed also. Through this process, categories are given connections with each other and this is called axial coding.

The final stage is the process of identifying the core category that connects with other categories, exploring similarities and relationships between categories. Experience of survivors in brothel, impact on self, role of BNWLA and challenges to their reintegration are some examples of selective coding in this study.

#### **4.5 Ethical issues**

Before leaving for the field, I applied for, and got research clearance from the NSD (Norwegian Social Science Data Services). From the Bangladeshi side, I did not need any specific permission from the authorities.

Working with trafficking survivors was an interesting and a bit challenging due to its sensitivity. I had to be mentally prepared before talking with the survivors to behave comfortably with them. At first, I introduced myself and described my purpose, why I would like to talk to them and for which purposes I will use the information. I asked for their verbal consent before starting the interview and also took the permission to use the tape recorder. I showed my respect while talking by calling them “apni” (seniors, unknown and respected persons are called by this term). I told them before that if they were not comfortable in answering any questions they could refuse. I tried my best to make them feel comfortable with me. Some girls started talking with little suspicion about my intentions, but after a while became really friendly with me. I was conscious about not asking them any questions which could hurt them. The women who were spontaneous and vocal to tell me everything without fear and shame, I asked more detailed questions like the numbers of customers they had daily, use of condoms and their payment by the customers. As explained above, I let them speak in Hindi so that others may not understand.

All throughout the research process I was very much concerned about keeping the confidentiality of the information. I kept the recording in my laptop which needs password to open. Notes that I have taken are stored in safe place. I will not use any information that may identify the survivors or make any harm to them. When searching for the girls in the villages, I had to spend a lot of time to find out houses of survivors. However, I did not mention that I wanted to visit the

trafficked girls' houses. When people asked me why I wanted to visit them, I told them that I was there from an NGO and the women were members of that NGO.

#### **4.6 My role as a researcher**

I was really careful about my position and tried to reduce the gap between me and informants. I was there to do my academic research and my relationship with NGO staffs was quite formal. I tried to respect BNWLA's regulations and faith of the workers and did not show my extreme curiosity about their work. Some women made some complaints about the NGO. I did not talk about this issue with the NGO staffs as I did not want to interfere in the policy of that organization. I was wearing very simple "salwar kamiz" (usual dress of Bangladeshi women) so that I would be treated like other Bangladeshi girl and it helped me to communicate with the people specifically with survivors and community people. Bangladesh is a Muslim country and in villages maintaining dress code is really important to get respect and honor. My friendliness, language and behavior helped me a lot to communicate with the survivors properly.

#### **4.7 Challenges and limitations**

I had faced some challenges regarding access to NGOs and getting information about them. Before going to Bangladesh, one organization committed to help me and one of my friends was working there. My friend told me that she had consulted with the program coordinator and he gave me permission. When I went to Bangladesh, my friend said that she would not be able to help me as she left the job. I tried to communicate with other people in the organization but they were not ready to help me as they first committed to help me on a basis of their employee's request.

I did not get the permission to visit the shelter home of BNWLA as they prohibit visitors entrance for the safety and psychological development of survivors. The NGO staffs both in Dhaka and Jessore were helpful but did not provide me proper secondary resources. However, the challenge for me was to rely on the information. As shelter home in-charge selected the survivors, I was aware of the possibility of getting superfluous or unauthentic information. I do not have any intention to victimize the survivors, I will depict the information that I have got from the survivors and NGO staff. In Jessore, where I met with women who had returned home,

I had to wait for the addresses and information for a long time as everyday they told me that they were busy.

Finding the houses of survivors was also problematic as the person who knew the places did not come with me every time. Being a female researcher in a country like Bangladesh may be challenging, it is a bit problematic to visit unknown places alone as people stare at you with a suspicious look. Everybody becomes interested to know what the woman is doing here. I was also conscious about the security as I did not know the roads of the city and the driver (taxi) could easily mislead me. Lots of kidnapping, rape and murder of women in Bangladesh happen through this way. I just tried to finish my work before the evening and come back safely at the hotel. While in Jessore, I became sick due to extreme hot weather and had to come back to Dhaka as I was staying in a hotel. Another problem I faced was anxiety about my security due to my gender. I was staying in a good and expensive hotel but I did not feel safe as I was alone.

Collecting secondary data was really challenging as BNWLA did not give me any of their yearly reports. They told me that they had reports but they had limited publications. I requested them to give me a copy so that I can take the notes but they refused. They just gave me one newsletter from 2006 and informed me about the number of rescued women, rehabilitation, and reintegration in recent years. I could not get any details of the program, nor of their success rate in recent years. Therefore, I went to the Center for Women and Children studies to collect the media coverage and other recent reports as it has many publications on trafficking issue. They collect reports from newspapers, collaborate with government to develop the country report and also initiate trafficked survivors' health protection programs in collaboration with other NGOs.

A limitation of my work is that I could just work with one organization to find out about their activities. I could not work with a large sample like a quantitative study as I had to spend long time for each interview. Moreover, I had limited opportunities to meet the survivors by my own. I could only communicate with the survivors who were rescued and reintegrated by BNWLA. They told me it would not be possible for them to provide more than 12 survivors for my research. I was only working with BNWLA, so I could not interview more survivors. The extent to which I can generalize the findings of my study is therefore limited. However, I really enjoyed the conversation with my informants. I felt the bond with survivors and could connect myself with them.

## CHAPTER 5. PROCESS OF TRAFFICKING AND EXPERIENCE IN BROTHEL

*Moyna Begum (20) belonged to a poor family. She did not get the chance to be educated due to poverty. She wanted to earn money and help family. Due to poverty, she came to Dhaka and started working in a garment factory. She got trafficked from Dhaka in 2006. She trusted one woman of her neighborhood who offered her a good job in Chittagong (another district). She became interested in that job as she wanted to earn more. She was handed over to one man from that woman and he took her to Jessore. In Jessore, she was handed over again and crossed the border with that man. They crossed the border illegally through a small road where there were no border guards. After crossing the border, she was taken to Calcutta and she became little bit suspicious. She thought Chittagong is far away and due to this it took time. In Calcutta, she was taken to a house and the man who had accompanied her left. She was informed in that house that she was in India, she stayed in the house for three days. After that, she was taken to Bombay and she started her life as a prostitute in a brothel. At first, she refused to do this, but at last, they forced her to start working as a prostitute. She was not given food and she had no other way out. She used to have 20 customers a day. The first few days she was going through extreme depression, but eventually she got used to the situation. She accepted everything as her fate. She was rescued by the police after three years while they were raiding the brothel. She stayed in an Indian shelter home for two years. She came back to Bangladesh in 2011 and stayed in BNWLA shelter home for one month; there she got the training in tailoring, making shoes and making show pieces. She went back to her parents, but started working again in manufacturing company due to poverty. She lives in Jessore town and do not visit her village home frequently. She does not feel good when people talk about her trafficking. Life is not easy for her as she could not save enough money. She wants to get married and wants to have a family. But she is scared of her past and believes that no one will come to marry her. Still, she wants to improve her life condition, forget the past and concentrate on her future. She filed a case against the trafficker and the case is in court.*

This above story represents thousands of Moyna Begum, who come to Dhaka to get rid of poverty and work hard day and night to change own luck. Unfortunately, many of them are trafficked to India and other countries where they start their new life as a prostitute. Their dreams are broken, life is threatened and reintegration in society is in question. My study outlines the

story of these survivors with their past experience, present life situation after rescue and their psychological strength to go ahead. This chapter includes Sadan's (2000) strength perspective and Kabeer's (1999) theory of empowerment along with stigma theories of Link and Phelan (2001) and Scambler and Paoli (2008).

### **Aim of this Chapter:**

Trafficking has multi-dimensional impacts on women's lives. This chapter will elaborate the process of trafficking and the experience of survivors after being trafficked. I will describe the process of hunting women for trafficking, maintaining the "safest ways" to cross the border, association with border guards and the psychological health impacts on survivors. This chapter will also outline the experience in brothel and also in Indian shelter home after rescue.

### **5.1 Causes of trafficking**

Trafficking is a common form of violence in Bangladesh that violates the human rights of women. As shown in the literature review, the reasons behind trafficking can be various. From my informants, I learned about the causes of trafficking such as poverty, lack of education and lack of unawareness. From my field work, I found that there were some specific causes for trafficking like luring through false promise of job, marriage, and seeking help to find address. Five survivors were trafficked by their neighbors and the reason was false promise of job. Two survivors were also trafficked by their colleagues with the false promise of job. One was trafficked by her own aunt who promised a good job to her niece in India. Two were trafficked by the strangers who deceived the women by false promise of finding address that the women were looking for. Two survivors were sold in brothel by their husbands. I found in my field work that causes of trafficking were different for each survivor.

Among the causes, poverty is an important factor behind trafficking as it plays a severe role to urban migrations of women that result in trafficking sometimes. According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2005 data, in Bangladesh about 27 million people (19.5 percent of the total population) live in extreme poverty, while 31 percent of rural population suffer from chronic poverty. All of the survivors belonged to poor family having poor background and lack of opportunities to study or have a good job. Their parents were doing low paid jobs and some of them had suffered from lack of sufficient food. Most of them were



dreaming about changing their future by reducing poverty and traffickers knew this priority of survivors very well. Vulnerability to poverty and other specific reasons helped to increase the number of trafficking in Bangladesh.

*Momena grew up in a big family with huge poverty. She had lots of brothers and sisters and it was almost impossible for her father to feed all members. Her mother managed to work for other people and supported them to survive. Momena had struggled with poverty from her childhood and she wanted to eat properly a day. She left her home when she was only 14 and she came to Dhaka city. She was completely unknown of the city but she started working in a garment's factory. After a few days, she was lured by her colleague who told her that she could get a good job and earn good money in another city. She trusted that woman but was sold to a brothel in Dhaka.*

She told me the following -

*'My father was really poor. He did not work every day as he was lazy. My mother mostly tried to manage food for us by working at rich people's house in village or stealing vegetables or foods sometimes. I suffered a lot from hunger. I could not wear good cloths and wanted to earn lot of money. I just left home for searching work as I did not want to starve anymore.'*

Due to poverty, many girls came to Dhaka city and trusted the people easily as they used to live a simple life in village where everybody knew and trusted each other. Lack of employment opportunities in village made these girls bound to migrate to Dhaka city and also increased the risks of being trafficked.

The interesting thing I found was that all of the women I interviewed were first approached by other women who offered the help. These women approached the “female targets” believing that a person of the same sex would be easy to trust. Survivors believed those women as they thought that they would be safe with them. The process to convince then was based on trust and comfort between two persons. It was easy for women traffickers to create an environment of trust as survivors believed that both of them shared the same background and same story of struggle due to poverty. Survivors understood that women traffickers were sympathetic to them and were trying to reduce their miseries as they have gone through the same situation. For this, women

traffickers were more effective in building trust than men to convince these survivors. Rehnuma (22) who was trafficked by a stranger who offered her help to find an address said the following-

*'I met the woman in bus station and she told me she would like to help me. I trusted her easily because I found her so caring and generous to me. I understood she would take me to my destination as I did not know the city properly. I became very happy even to meet a woman like her on my way as I was feeling helpless. Now I know I ruined my life by my mistake. I trusted someone and that was my mistake. How can I trust people anymore?'*

As has been shown in several studies, the traffickers look for the vulnerable women in villages and cities and create an environment of trust. They offer lucrative jobs in neighboring countries like India and Pakistan and convince the parents also (Gazi, et. al., 2001). Like Hodge and Lietz (2007) study, my study found that traffickers knew very well that all girls belonged to poor family and they approached them by offering good job. On other instances, the literature shows that some are cheated brutally by the false promise of marriage which destroys the girl's will power totally and cause even more intensive psychological trauma. Traffickers act like a promising lover and get married also with the girls. Parents also do not delay to accept the offer of marriage if there is any promise of payment (Hussain, 2000). Due to dowry system which means providing money, furniture or valuable things to the groom in daughter's marriage, poor parents prefer to accept any proposal and arrange marriage without any cross checking about groom. Because of this problem, parents arrange marriage with older men with small amount of dowry or no dowry at all. In such cases, parents do not investigate properly about groom and his family (Gazi, et. al., 2001). They arrange the marriage if the girl is only 13 or 14 years old even and do not register the marriage as the government rule is after 18 years old, girls should get married. When trafficking occurs, they rarely can provide any information about the groom or get failed to prove the marriage because of not having registration paper. I also encountered such a case in my study:

*Rina Khatun was a teenager when she fell in love with a guy of nearest area. Her family was poor and the guy was also not rich. The two families were against this relationship but the girl left her family and got married with him. He behaved very nicely for 1 year and later on started to torture her for dowry. As she belonged to a poor family and did not have any connection with her family, it was not possible for her to arrange money for her husband. Her husband then told*

*her to go to India to work as a housemaid. Her sister in law also was involved in this conspiracy. They convinced her that earning good money could change their life. She had no other option as she could not manage the dowry. Her husband was with her when she crossed the border illegally and took her in a house in Calcutta. He sold her to a man and got 80000 taka which was a big money for the poor people. He left with the money and Rina was taken to Bombay. She was sold again to a brothel. It was highly upsetting for her that her own husband sold her out.*

*She told*

*'I could not imagine even what my husband did to me. I loved him so much. I trusted him and went with him to India. I had no idea that a husband could sell his wife to a brothel. He was greedy and wanted me to arrange money for him. I could not arrange but never thought he would do so.'*

It was difficult for Rina to cope with the situation as she could not bear this that her husband sold her. Within marriage, it may be easy to traffic a girl or sell her anywhere as women do not raise any question and trust their husbands. Similarly, relatives were also able to sell the girls in India with false promise of job.

*I met one informant named Fatima in BNWLA Jessore office and she came with her mother. She was the only HIV positive girl amongst all the survivors. She belonged to a poor family and was living in village with her own family. She was lured by her own aunt (mother's own sister) who sold her to a Indian brothel. That woman's one daughter was living in India and she told to Fatima's mother that it would change her daughters luck and would help to reduce the poverty. She also mentioned that Fatima was going to live with her own daughter and it would be really safe for Fatima. Fatima and her mother got convinced and they never had a vision of the coming disaster. Fatima was taken to the border by her aunt and then she was handed over to a guy who was supposed to take her to her cousin's place. Fatima never met her cousin and she was sold out in a brothel. She was there for a year and became HIV positive.*

Nasima Akhter was trafficked by her neighbor who offered her a lucrative job in another city. At first, she said no but eventually got convinced. She gave a new thought of the offer as she wanted to earn more money.

*'My neighbor told me that I would be able to earn more and also would help my parents back home. I said no and told her that I was not interested. She did not stop rather she insisted again and again. I started to think again and I felt it was a very good offer. For once even, I had no idea that she would sell me to India! I trusted her and she ruined my life. I did not know about trafficking and I was so foolish that time! I would not have trusted her.'*

Deception and fraud were common techniques to convince the poor girls as they wanted to reduce poverty and also wanted to be self-reliable. My informants' vulnerability to poverty, lack of education and lack of awareness influenced them to get attracted to the offer of traffickers. The unawareness about the fact of trafficking increased the risk of trafficking for women who were poor and migrated to the city in search of work or employed with low wage. They believed the traffickers lucrative offers and forgot about the risks. However, they were not well aware of the consequence of accepting the offers.

## **5.2 Routes of trafficking- crossing the border**

Bangladesh is a South Asian country having borders with India and Myanmar. Bangladesh is surrounded by India and it has 26 borders and 20 transit points with India. Unfortunately, these transit points are used illegally to traffic the girls to India. Generally, Jessore is a high risk district and all the survivors of my study crossed the border through Jessore. Almost all of them were working or living in Dhaka and traffickers lured them for better future. Most of them did not understand even that they crossed the border as they did not know the place. Later on, they realized that they actually crossed the border. Nasima said:

*'I did not know that I was in Jessore. Now I understand that I was in Jessore and crossed the border illegally. It was a narrow road with bush; there were no guards or barbed wire to understand that this was the boundary between Bangladesh and India. I understood later that I crossed a border'.*

Survivors like Nasima could not realize that they were heading to another country and it was a complete shock for them when they understood that they were no more in Bangladesh. Jessore border was used to traffic my survivors as reaching Calcutta was easy from there. The whole border area was not protected with border guards. In some places, there was no barbed wire. Those who crossed the border through this route, they walked until they reached the road. Some

survivors knew that they were going to India to do work and some thought that they were going to another city of Bangladesh. Two girls were doped and they had no idea how they crossed the border.

However, some of the survivors' crossed the border in front of border guards and nobody asked them any questions as the guards were bribed and let them go without arguing. Jomila Khatun said:

*'I knew that I was going to India. We crossed the border in front of the guards. I did not know that I was supposed to have a passport or that going to India without passport or visa was illegal. But the guards did not ask me for my passport. They had a little conversation with the guy accompanying me and I think he bribed the guards.'*

The border guards helped the traffickers and in consequence were responsible for the trafficking. Moreover, little security in border areas was another facilitator to illegal trafficking. It was easy to use non guarded routes as traffickers did not have to bribe the border guards even and it was easy for them to traffic the girls without any hassle.

As mentioned above, all the girls were trafficked through the Jessore border and they were first taken to Calcutta. All of them were handed over three or four times before they reached Calcutta. They stayed at someone's home for two or three days. That was the primary destination for them and they were not directly taken to the brothel. After two or three days some were distributed to Pune, Bombay and Madras and some were sold out in Calcutta brothels.

Nargis said:

*'I was taken to Bombay by bus. One man took me to the bus station and we were sitting on bus. He told me not to make any sound and I did so. I was really scared. I saw a police nearby the bus and I was thinking to call him. But the bus started running.'*

Most of the survivors went to the final destination by bus or train. If they had realized even about their trafficking, they could not escape or take help from anyone. They were frightened by the traffickers that they would be killed or left in a road. The survivors were in new country and they did not know the language too. It was not possible for them to get help from someone. After taking them in brothel, their life as a sex worker started and they faced a new reality of life.

### 5.3 Involvement in prostitution and life in brothel

Trafficking in women from Bangladesh very often occurs for the purpose of prostitution. All my informants were engaged in prostitution except one who was working in bar. All of them had gone through sexual exploitation. Dipa who was trafficked by a stranger in bus station said:

*'I was totally surprised. When I saw girls were standing with heavy make up in line downstairs. I was little bit confused. Eventually I came to learn that they were standing there for customers. I was sinking inside when I understood that I would have to do the same. It was difficult for me as I would not think even of sleeping with someone.'*

My informants had to face a new phase in their life and it was very difficult for them at the beginning. They were given one or two days to get prepared psychologically to get involved in prostitution. It was a completely new environment to them. They had to lose their virginity in the brothel and in Bangladesh; virginity is considered as a precious thing for girls that should be saved only for husbands. In the beginning, they were given good clothes and were ordered to get dressed and put make up on their face. All of them told me that they cried a lot and it was almost impossible for them to think about doing such kind of work. Nasima who was trafficked by her colleague with the false promise of job said:

*'I could not imagine even that I would do that bad work and I was completely shocked. When at first I said no I was beaten and I did not get food also. I was determined that I would not do this work but still I had to submit myself at last as I was too hungry and was beaten up. You will not understand the situation how I got ready for doing bad work. I knew also that I would not get chance to escape. It was the only option in front of me.'*

Like Nasima most of the survivors were physically beaten up and were not given food until they said 'yes' to prostitution after their arrival in brothel. Moreover, some survivors told me that the pimps sent the customer in the room and locked the door from outside. That first customer raped them and it continued until they submitted themselves to the customers willingly. These were the ways that pimps used to engage the survivors in prostitution. When they started to work willingly, they were provided sufficient food and water.

Survivors in brothel started doing sex work two or three days after their arrival. Life in brothel was absolutely different from the life they experienced in Bangladesh. They were supposed to take lots of customers each day though sometimes they were sick or did not feel good. Their life was completely chained in brothel with certain rules and regulations like not to go out, take more customers, not to argue with customers and do what the customers said. The type of brothel was not the same for all survivors. Some brothels were based on specific area's having 15-20 rooms and some were three to five storied building. But all kinds of brothels were properly protected by guards so that nobody could get out. The newcomers to brothel had to be more careful to maintain the rules and follow the orders of others.

Nargis was trafficked by her neighbor and she said:

*'I was given a room of my own where I had to sleep with the customers. I used to take twenty five customers each day. I used condoms as I knew about AIDS. I was not allowed to open the window as people could notice us. My only duty was to take more and more customers each day. I did not have any life there.'*

Like Nargis all the survivors were supposed to take lots of customers a day. It was the benefit of pimps and survivors also got some money if they could satisfy the customers. They could not see the day light as they were supposed to close the window. Mostly all of them slept at day time and from the evening they started taking customers. Most of my informants knew about HIV and used condoms also. Pimps generally did not listen to any excuses like sickness, headache or pain in body, only the time of menstruation they could rest for five or six days.

Dina said:

*'Brothel life was something really new to me. It took some time to get used to the environment. Everybody talked in dirty language and teased me saying 'neyamaal' (new staff). I felt so suffocated at the beginning as everything seemed like hell to me. There was no shame among all the girls and I felt so ashamed at the beginning when they talked in front of me but eventually I became like them'.*

In the brothel, people were used to speak in dirty languages or used sex related words. New comers in brothel had to face a different environment that they had not imagined even before

coming. Everybody made lots of fun about the newcomers as they were new with fresh bodies in this profession. Eventually the survivors got used to the teasing and to their new life.

#### **5.4 Impact on health**

Living in a brothel was not a good experience at all for all the survivors and it had some impacts on their health. Mostly the survivors faced two types of health impacts and these were physical and psychological –

**Physical health impact:** My informants went through some violence at the beginning until they were ready to act according to the instruction given by the pimps. As mentioned, some of them were beaten up physically. Most of them were supposed to take lots of customers in a day and this too had bad impact on their health. At the beginning, they had pain in vagina, waist and also in whole body. Survivors informed me that some of them felt itching in vagina and also had faced the problem of extreme white discharge. Most of them have experienced vaginal itching because of the frequent contact with customers and also due to unhygienic environment they were living in. In addition, some of them were told to take medicine to gain weight, a medicine that could harm their lungs, kidneys and other parts of body. Some of them said that they did not feel hungry but dizzy after taking those medications.

Dina said:

*‘I was so skinny and young also that time. The Pimps gave me tablets and I used to take it. I did not feel good after taking the tablet. But I had to continue.’*

Survivors told me that, it was believed in the brothel that a healthy girl could attract men easily and for this some of them were used to take it. But it was not good for their health and when they stopped taking the medicine after rescue, they became skinny again. Moreover, the dizziness, headache and physical discomfort continued for a while.

Dina also said,

*‘I was living in a small stuffed room and could not open the window. I was dying for fresh air. I could not breathe properly. I felt to take a deep breath in open air.’*



Those who were living in an area based brothel, were also living in a small room with very small window or no window at all. Mostly they had to take customers continuously and they were locked in the room that time. Those who were living in a building were also not allowed to open the window and curtain. They had to spend the whole day and night mostly in a small room without fresh air. It also increased the risk of respiratory diseases.

From my informants narratives I came to learn that they lived in a congested place full of dirt like used condoms, garbage of foods, untidy bed sheets, and also dirty floors. They were not living in a clean environment and the toilet was also unhygienic. Most of them did not get enough chance to wash their clothes daily or they could not due to tiredness. Because of this they had skin diseases like rashes, itching, and wound of itching. In the brothel, survivors could buy their daily necessary staffs like soap, face cream, condom, medicine and food items also and they did not have to go outside. Transmission of HIV was not prevalent among my informants and I found one informant who was HIV positive. These were the health impacts on my informants that I found while interviewing them.

**Psychological health impact:** Survivors had gone through a traumatic situation after coming to the brothel. Thus faced sexual exploitation every day and they did not have any bargaining power or right to live. From survivors narratives, the information came out that they were chained with lots of restrictions and did not have any right to go outside. Most of them were psychologically depressed as suddenly they were taken in a new environment. They were always controlled by someone and were bound to do whatever had been told.

Rehnuma said

*'I was cheated by one person and I believed her. I did not want to believe anybody anymore. She ruined my life.....when I came to brothel, they compelled me to do the sex work. I was badly scared thinking that they would kill me or beat me or could do something so bad that I could not imagine event. Whenever the pimp came to my room, my heart started beating fast and I was absolutely broken inside. I could not sleep for many days until I got used to everything. I always had bad dreams and I did not get any peace anywhere. How much I cried you cannot imagine. I thought I was doing bad work and still I feel that I am a bad woman.'*

Most of my informants shared similar feelings. They had lived in a different environment before trafficking and they had to adjust with the new situation after trafficking. They were cheated while trafficked and it affected their psychological behavior to trust someone again. Mostly they were frightened at the beginning until they were ready to start working as a commercial sex worker. The trauma after being cheated increased the lack of trust among the survivors.

The survivors informed me that it was really shocking for them when they were recognized as prostitutes. The first shock they got was being trafficked and doing sex work. They observed the transformation in their identity as they were known as prostitute. They all were ashamed and also depressed to lose the identity of a good girl.

From the survivor's information, I came to understand that the long time enslavement in brothel destroyed their psychological wellbeing. Most of them were sold by the traffickers for five to six years and the survivors were bonded to continue the sex work and pay back the money to the pimps. Survivors were told by the pimps that if they could take more customers than they would be free quickly. They were frightened to do sex work and they were in pressure to buy freedom for selves. They could not sleep properly and also had nightmares. Study of Janice G. Raymond, Jean D'Cunha, Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, H. Patricia Hynes, Zoraida Ramirez Rodriquez, Aida Santos (2002) also described the same problem in sleeping, and feeling frightened, paranoid, and ashamed. My study is also similar with Janice and Dona's (2001) findings as they mentioned that women and girls who are trafficked for prostitution often inform about depression, feelings of hopelessness, and emotionlessness that made the survivors unable to feel even.

### **5.5 Rescue process**

The NGO I worked with, BNWLA helped the survivors to return to Bangladesh, but the rescue from brothel was done mainly by Indian police. Most of them were rescued in police raids at the brothel. There were other Bangladeshi, Nepalese and Indian girls in each brothel. The brothel was mostly well protected with guards and they informed the pimps about the arrival of police. The broker hid the girls and sometimes the police went back empty handed.

Dina said:

*'When the police came, the pimps told us to hide in a small place and covered it with cloth. I was shivering inside and was also scared. I heard before that if I would get caught, I would be beaten up by the police. I forgot about the rescue and just started thinking about what would happen to me if the police caught me. After searching the house properly, the police discovered us. The owner tried to bribe them but it did not work and we were all taken into police custody. Police asked me about my nationality and also asked me about my passport. I said I had nothing and I was cheated by someone who brought me to India. They did not beat me and I was staying in custody for a while. I finally got relief from hell.'*

Almost all the survivors had faced such a situation when they were rescued by police. Police came to the brothel based on information from some sources and mostly came at night. The owner got the information quickly by others and hid the girls. Some of them were sent out of the brothel area through the back doors. Sometimes police could not catch them as they left the place before their arrival. At night, there were lots of customers in the brothel and they were also caught by the police. The police took all into the police station and survivors were taken in custody. In some cases, the owners of the brothel came to take back the girls in brothel from police station and some girls went with the owners. It seemed that those girls wanted to continue their life in prostitution. My informants were Bangladeshi and due to this, their cases were dealt more carefully.

Nargis said

*'I stayed at brothel for three months. I had a customer who was a police and he used to come at my place. I got close to him and I used to tell him my story and miseries. I requested him to rescue me from this place. He started to like me also and he promised me that he would do so. After few days police came. Everybody got scared and started running to hide themselves. I also got scared as suddenly police came. The owner could not hide us as the police came so quickly and they did not take bribe even. We were told before to hide in a safe place if police came. They also threatened us to not come out until the police had gone. Luckily, that day police came so quickly and we did not get chance to hide. We all were taken to the police station. I saw that policeman in the police station and I became relaxed. I was taken into police custody after that. I felt really good that I could finally get out of brothel. I am really grateful to that policeman who*

*helped me so much. Though he was a customer but he did not think of his comfort and helped me willingly.'*

Others were less lucky than Nargis and had spent years in brothel. Whenever the police came, the brothel owner tried to bribe them. Sometimes police took the money and went or sometimes they took all to the police station. The survivors were given instructions about what to do if the police came. They were told to hide in a place that would not be identified from outside easily. Some of them told me that they were threatened by the pimps to remain hidden and also to keep quiet so that it would be difficult for the police to find them. Survivors had to face again scary situation while police raid at the brothel. They were totally confused about what to do that time. They wanted to get rescued but also were afraid of police. Some of the survivors said that when they were taken in police custody, they did not feel safe as they could be raped by the police also. Only after they had reached the shelter home, they started to get a feeling of safety and normal life.

## **5.6 Life in Indian shelter home**

The survivors started a new life in Indian shelter home after being rescued from the brothel. The police authority kept the survivors for a while in custody as cases were filed against the survivors. Some women's organizations were also working for the justice to survivors. They also helped police and together proved in court that these girls were trafficked from Bangladesh. Survivors were transferred to the Indian shelter home from the police custody. Most of my survivors were in Indian shelter homes but a few came directly to Bangladesh from police custody. Indian women's organization helped BNWLA to rescue the survivors from the police custody and processed their returning. In shelter home, survivors were taken care of properly.

Rehnuma said

*'It was a good experience in the shelter home and I was happy after going there. Everybody took care of me and the other girls. They treated us nicely. They did physical checkup of me and also provided me with psychological counseling. Doctors gave medicine to those who were having physical problems.'*

In the shelter home, at first they provided physical and psychological treatment to all the survivors. The environment was helpful to the survivors to recover psychologically. At the shelter home, they started to forget their past stories and also got used to normal living.

Nargis said:

*'I was really happy in the shelter home. I did not want to come back to Bangladesh. I told didi (a worker in shelter home) that I wanted to stay and work with them. I also had the feeling that my parents might not come to take me back home. I was having the perception that my neighbors or relatives would behave negatively with me. But they did not let me stay there. A group of forty nine girls were waiting to come back in Bangladesh and I was also sent back in Bangladesh with them.'*

Some survivors were anxious about their acceptance in family and society and for this they did not want to come back. They had the feeling that coming back home would be a bad idea. They were feeling humiliated inside as they worked as 'prostitutes' and they were scared also that everybody would know the truth. They did not want to reveal this reality in front of their parents or community people. However, it was not possible for them to live in Indian shelter home for the lifetime as they were not Indian. They were Bangladeshi and Indian authority decided to send them back to Bangladesh.

Indian shelter home provided different trainings to make them empowered and arranged entertainment to recover from the memories quickly.

Nasima said,

*'I got training on sewing, bakery, candle making and also show piece making. I also used to play volleyball, badminton, and table tennis. I used to spend my time always doing something and earned some money also.'*

Like Nasima, all the survivors got various kinds of training so that they could be economically sufficient after coming home. They earned money also when their hand made things were sold. The money was little but still they were happy. Indian shelter home first provided the necessary treatment, training and counseling to the survivors that helped them to recover little bit. It was a good strategy to prepare them for the reintegration in own country. BNWLA has been working

officially from 1991 on trafficking issue. They have good collaboration with some Indian NGOs. According to the Program Coordinator of BNWLA, they follow some general steps to facilitate the returning of survivors. They contact the Indian NGOs and those NGOs take steps to communicate with the shelter home. As survivors do not carry a passport with them, the Indian NGOs help to get permission from the authority clearance to leave India and come back to Bangladesh. To complete the whole process BNWLA communicates daily with those collaborating organizations and finally survivors are sent from India and they directly come to BNWLA shelter home. The same way BNWLA processed the returning of my informants.

## **5.7 Discussion**

The whole chapter shares the story of survivors that reveals the reasons of trafficking, process of trafficking, their involvement in prostitution and how they were rescued and returned to Bangladesh. The journey of becoming a 'prostitute' from a simple girl was painful. They came to Dhaka to work and reduce poverty. The traffickers sold the survivors' by promising them to give better job that could change the luck of the poor family. Unfortunately, all of them bought the dream and it ended up in brothel. Sadan's (2004) concept of powerlessness can be used here to denote the powerless situation of survivors. Powerlessness is the inability to control own body and situation and survivors found themselves in such a powerless situation. They were living in a vulnerable state due to poverty and had no resources to develop their economic condition. Poverty worked as one of the main sources to push them into powerless situation and traffickers took the advantage by offering them good job. Limited opportunities of jobs worked as the push factor for the survivors and they got trafficked. Survivors' did not have idea about their trafficking while they crossed the border. They were targeted by the traffickers as they were powerless, illiterate, and unconscious about trafficking. All the survivors had no idea about destination and they could not recognize even that they had crossed the border. When they crossed the border and entered India, some of them suspected that something was wrong. However, when they came to learn about their trafficking, they could not ask any question as they were threatened. They were helpless as they did not know the language and could not report to the police. Survivors lacked power when they reached brothel and started to work as a prostitute. They were forced, beaten, raped and abused to start taking customers and earn money for the pimp. They were powerless and had no control over own bodies and situations and they

had to accept the condition of pimps due to the severe abuse they were going through. They had no right to go outside, go in fresh air, choose own customer and were controlled by the pimps. They suffered from physical health related problems but could not visit doctors as they were restricted by the pimps. The powerless state of survivors created the fear and survivors' confidence level was broken and it resulted in psychological trauma for them. Their conditions created the sense of powerlessness among them, which hindered them to go against the abuse.

Sanghera (1999) showed the same reasons that I found while doing my field work that women and girls are trafficked through deception, false promise of job and marriage while some are kidnapped or abducted also. My informants were lured, cheated by false promise of job or marriage. All my informants were taken to India. Nair (2004) mentioned that when the Bangladeshi girls are trafficked to India, they are first kept in West Bengal and Orissa. This study finding is similar to my findings as all the survivors were taken in West Bengal (Calcutta) first. Then they are distributed in other parts of India or outside of India. All the survivors have gone through extreme physical and psychological violences when they were living in brothel. Huda (2006) mentioned that trafficked women are more vulnerable to physical health impacts as they are unable to reach the proper medication due to lack of freedom, indebtedness, poverty and inability to speak foreign language. I could connect Huda's study with my study as my informants also could not get proper medication always. They had to buy medicine from brothel shop or nearby shops. If the medicine was not available, they lived without medicine.

INCIDIN Bangladesh and ILO study (2002) found that women suffered from psychological trauma due to their work as a prostitute. It broke their psychological strength and attacked them emotionally. Heatherton (et.al., 2000) mentioned about the loss of identity that depicts how survivors' identity was changed. When they were rescued from brothel and went to police station, they were recognized as prostitutes. They already lacked self-esteem due to their involvement in prostitution. It created a sense of shame among them and it led to the loss of identity. Lind and Phelan (2001) also described the process of stigmatization and showed how labeling can stigmatize people. Their view connects with the survivors as they were labeled as prostitutes and it changed their identities. Their recognition as prostitutes depressed them psychologically. This feeling created the sense of self stigma among the survivors (Paoli and Scambler, 2008). My informants described to me how much they were psychologically upset due

to the changing identity and enslavement. They have gone through the mixed emotion of guilt, helplessness and sadness. They stop to trust people and try to escape from the past. All of them passed a bitter life full of suffering.

Through after the rescue of survivors from brothel a new phase started that led survivors to develop psychological strength and come out from trauma. Kabeer (1999) gave the idea about developing agency through the resources to acquire the ability that they were denied. Indian shelter home provided counseling and skill development training that helped to recover the survivors primarily from the past memories. In shelter home all of them got a new life and got facilities to recover themselves. Some of them directly came to BNWLA shelter home from police custody. Rest of the survivors also came to Bangladesh and shifted in BNWLA shelter home. My following chapter will describe their new life in BNWLA shelter home.



## **CHAPTER 6. LIFE IN BNWLA SHELTER HOME**

Reintegration is a process that starts with the rehabilitation activities in shelter home that include medical, psycho-social and economic services to the survivors. After rescuing survivors they are mostly rehabilitated in shelter homes where they get primary physical and psychological help services that contribute to develop survivors' psycho-social adaptability to be a part of society again. The shelter home not only provides physical and psychological treatment but also a balanced diet, clothing, education and training to the survivors. However, the study faced some limitations as I could not visit shelter home but I got the impressions from the gatekeeper's conversation about the shelter home. I talked to one shelter home in-charge of Dhaka and other staffs of BNWLA. Gatekeepers in their interview talked about the positive changes of survivors after providing their service in shelter home. It seemed that survivors recovered from all the past memories all of a sudden, which sounded little superfluous. However, I was trying to find out detailed information and I had to rely on them. The survivors were randomly selected by gatekeepers that could also influence the information. However, I am well concerned about the possible realities and will picturize the information from my informant's point of view. This chapter uses empowerment theories of Kabeer (1999), Mosedale (2003), Saleebey (2006) and Sadan (2000) to guide to understand the level of analyze the empowerment of survivors.

### **Aim of this chapter**

This chapter continues the story of survivors after returning from India to Bangladesh. Survivors were first taken to BNWLA shelter home where a new phase of their life started. Most of them were anxious about their acceptance in society and family and were depressed as they did not know what kind of situation they would be going through after coming back to Bangladesh. This chapter describes the life of survivors in the shelter homes including the support received to their psychological recovery, returning to the track of 'normal life', training to economic well-being and finally some other challenges related to their economic advancement.

### **6.1 Counseling to psychological recovery**

From the survivors' narratives and shelter home in-charge's report I got the understanding that survivors had gone through extreme physical and psychological violence from the process of recruitment in trafficking. As discussed in chapter 5, the psychological health impact on them

included depression, trauma due to enslavement, trauma due to losing their identity, inability to trust other people and lack of self-confidence. The survivors' also had a strong feeling that the humiliation would not stop; rather it might increase when they would be sent back to their family or community. The continuous negative attitude and humiliation accelerated their depression and post-traumatic stress. It seemed that they were psychologically disturbed while talking about the possible reaction of community people towards them and somehow survivors' blamed themselves for being trafficked. In the shelter home, survivors resided in a situation of recovery through the counseling, but the process took time and required continuous support.

The in-charge of Dhaka shelter home revealed some interesting information about survivors. She informed me about their physical treatments. When survivors first came in shelter home, they went through the HIV/AIDS and STD test. She told me that with the aim to bring survivors under the rehabilitation process, BNWLA had designed its shelter home accordingly. She said that they followed a planned counseling process by hiring professional counselors and ensured the friendly environment for the survivors by prioritizing their privacy. She was working in BNWLA from 2003 and was experienced as concerns the survivors' needs, their counseling process and other facilities BNWLA provided to be in the process of reintegration. She said:

*'Generally we find two categories of survivors in our shelter home. One group is really aggressive and dominant whereas another group is extremely introverted. We have to deal with two different types and we take our steps according to this. First we observe them for few days to find out the characteristics of new comer survivor. The newcomer survivor comes to the shelter home with different sorts of behaviors or psychological disorders that she developed in brothel. Aggressive behavior means shouting on others, screaming, losing temper quickly, impatience, violence like breaking stuffs, negative attitude with mates, and frequent fighting with others. They do not want to follow the rules and get aggressive to show their dominant behavior. I believe survivors absorb the dominant behavior from their past experiences where they were controlled. Suddenly, when they are rescued they get scared of facing the reality of society and due to the low esteem get violent and try to control the situation. Another group, I mean the introverted group do not talk to others, stay aside and keep quiet. They do not like to interact with others and seem to be depressed always. After such observation, we provide need based treatment for the survivors. We provide different treatment to these two groups and sessions are*

*arranged differently for them. When they all come to a stable psychological stage, we assemble together in the session. However, it takes long time to assemble them together.'*

The information from the Shelter home in-charge gave the impression that all the survivors were properly observed and were categorized for better treatment. She explained how they managed to help the survivors to accept the previous life and adopt new coping mechanisms. According to the shelter home in-charge, they wanted to help to recover these survivors psychologically so that they could be able to regain the psychological power and strengthen their agency. The shelter home in-charge talked in a very positive terms about helping the survivors and the rules that survivors were supposed to follow to adjust within a new environment. She did not mention about the restrictions of shelter home but it came out from her interview that survivors were not allowed to go outside and also had to follow the routines. She said that the staff of the shelter home and counselor needed lots of patience and positive energy to deal with survivors' depression, anxiety and behavioral change. However, it was obvious from survivors and shelter home in-charge's interview that the physical and psychological trauma experienced by women in prostitution really affected the survivors' behavior and attitude. The shelter home in-charge believed that it would not be easy for the women to get rid of past experiences as it might have further effect in their social life in terms of acceptance in community, getting respect or being treated like other normal people. She mentioned that survivors were severely vulnerable at the primary stage in shelter home due to physical and psychological abuse. When they provided continuous assistance, eventually survivors' got prepared to go back to normal life. She also pointed out some other psychological health impacts that corresponded with survivors' narratives presented in chapter 5.

She said:

*'We find certain types of psychological health problems like they do not want to trust anybody. They go through extreme depression and do not want to socialize with anyone. They have difficulty in sleeping and mostly they lack the positive inspiration of life. The aggressive one can even harm others. They lack self-confidence, are ashamed of what they did and consider themselves as the guilty one. All this negative attitudes destroy their will power to live or face the outside world. We try to reduce those negativities through counseling that can also help them to get back the confidence.'*

From the view of the shelter home in-charge, I understood the sensitivity of the survivors' situation and also got an understanding of why they restricted strangers to visit shelter home. Counselors and the staff dealt with the situation that helped the survivors to adjust within a new environment and also improved their psychological well-being to live in the society like other people.

Survivors also said that they were living a good life in shelter home and they appreciated the counseling. Jonaki akhter was trafficked by her colleague and she came directly from Indian police custody to Bangladesh. She said,

*'I am so happy living here. I am recovering myself and I hope to start a new life now. I have got the counseling weekly at the beginning and now I do not have that much session with doctor. It was really difficult at the beginning to adjust with this environment as I came from brothel. I was highly depressed but now I know the meaning of life. I do not want to go back to my family and want to live here.'*

Like Jonaki other survivors also found the shelter home really important to start a new life. But one more interesting thing was hitting my mind. These girls had a feeling that they got their confidence back but some of them did not want to go back to home or community. Moreover, those who were reintegrated already did not want to stay in community. It seemed that they were not ready to face those people and it raised the question of their confidence level. Survivors told me that they liked the shelter home as they were less depressed than before and learnt to accept their past experiences. Somehow, from their description, it was clear that residing survivors' in shelter home was the first step of reintegration and it helped the survivors to improve their psychological health problems.

## **6.2 Maintaining a normal life**

BNWLA shelter home provides the basic necessities like proper diet, clothing, shelter, education, and treatment to promote a good life standard to the survivors. They maintain the privacy of survivors by limiting others' access to shelter home and perform a proper daily routine to help the survivors' to lead a normal life. When the survivor first came in shelter home, many found it difficult to follow the rules but eventually they got used to them. Shelter home in charge said:

*'We prefer to follow certain daily routines where the survivors can get used to a disciplined life. They get balanced meal thrice every day and on weekend (Friday) we arrange rich foods like polao (rice with butter and spices), roasted chicken, or beef curry. They share the house work and help each other. Sometimes they fight and the older one tries to dominate the younger ones. But it gets solved also when others make them understand. They divide the work and do the cleaning of shelter home, cook for themselves, wash dishes and also wash their own clothes.'*

As I could not visit the shelter home, I had to depend on the information given by shelter home in-charge. From her interview, it also came out that through the shared labor, everybody socialized more with each other. Moreover, when busy with work and they could get rid of depression. From shelter home in-charge interview I got to know that they tried to reorient survivors' behaviors to bring some changes in their thinking. They guided them to associate more with others to increase their collective agency. She also mentioned about entertainment facilities. Survivors have got facilities to watch movies, drama and daily serials. Every day they used to watch television from evening to 10 pm. She told me that all of the survivors loved to watch television and that was the most important form of entertainment. They also arranged some programs with the survivors and all survivors participated in those programs. Some sang, some acted in play, some showed dance. Everybody participated in those group activities to show their potential talent.

She mentioned:

*'When we organize these types of cultural programs they spontaneously participate. It is a strategy to help them recovering from past experiences. They get to know each other more, the introverted one break the silence and all develop the socialization skill and also regain the self-esteem to get back to normal life.'*

I interviewed the survivors first and shelter home in-charge at last. For this limitation I could not get the information from survivors about these cultural activities. Shelter home in-charge said they also arranged sports competitions like volleyball, table tennis and chess. Through the practice, survivors developed themselves both physically and psychologically. It seemed that all activities were designed to give the survivors a normal life and boost up their psychological strength. Moreover, according to the BNWLA prospectus they arranged some recreational tours

for survivors which was another source of enjoyment for them and helped them to come out of regular life of shelter home. The shelter home in-charge believed that all these events were important to strengthen the survivor's personal development and also reduce their isolation or depression due to past experiences. Though I could not talk about these issues with the survivors, they informed me about the diet, clothing and treatment. Whoever I interviewed seemed happy in shelter home. As mentioned previously, there might be selection bias in terms of who agreed to give an interview or who shelter home in-charge convinced to talk to me.

### **6.3 Attention to sexual behavior**

In shelter home, survivors got lots of facilities and treatment that were necessary to pull them back into the normal life. Counselors and shelter home staffs had to deal with different psychological problems of survivors and one of the issues that was given attention was that of survivors' sexual behavior.

Shelter home in-charge said:

*'We sometimes face this problem. Some of the survivors get involved in sexual relations with other mates. They were living in brothel for long time they were sexually exploited and were having frequent sexual relations. Their bodies get used to sexual relationships and they may want to get back that feeling. It takes times to come out of such behaviors.'*

I came to learn about this interesting thing from her of which I had no idea before. It was an important issue for the survivors and also for the counselors or staff who were working with them. From shelter home in-charges point of view the sexual exploitation had led their bodies to adjust with this situation. At the beginning it was so difficult for them but later on they accepted their destiny and it became a kind of profession for them. As their body got used to having sexual relationship, they might develop an over-sexualized behavior. Crawford and Kaufman (2005) in their study about the reintegration process of survivors mentioned one case that developed sexualized behavior. It depicted that survivors had undergone a difficult exploitative situation that changed their sexual behavior.

I did not have any discussion with survivors about this issue. I interviewed the survivors before knowing this; however that was not only the reason, even if I would have got chance to ask I

would not as it might affect their emotions and self esteem or make them embarrassed. I had to rely on shelter home in-charges information that might be somewhat exaggerated. She mentioned that shelter home staffs were careful to understand the psychology of survivor and discovering this habit was also a challenge for them. From the in-charge I came to learn that counselors dealt with the situation carefully; as if they restricted them directly, it could have a harmful impact on them. It needed another strategy to solve the problem. Those who wanted to have sex with other women, they were separated and they were not allowed to sleep in same bed. Moreover, if two girls were suspected of having sex, they were separated from each other by distributing their duties with somebody else, so that they could not spend enough time together. Moreover, they were given counseling to avoid this sexual behavior. This was also a reason why the service providers were concerned. Bangladesh is a Muslim country and Islam forbids homosexuality as it is considered as sinful and punishable acts.<sup>8</sup> In this circumstance, developing this types of sexual behavior was not appreciated rather was attempted to be cured. She explained me how they spotted those survivors who were absorbing this sexualized behavior. They observed body language and also kept an eye on the suspicious one. When they got confirmed, they took necessary steps. She told me:

*'I understand why they develop such sexual behavior suddenly. It is because they cannot control themselves. This is human nature. If you are used to with something, you cannot live without it or find another way to get it. The same things happen to the survivor. Most of them were in brothels for long years and their bodies want physical interaction. Like drug addiction, this is also one form of addiction. But we never scold them or make them embarrassed that can destroy their long term psychological development. We take time and follow our strategy.'*

From her understanding it was clear that they gave attention to survivors' sexualized behavior and tried to develop those behaviors and attitudes of them that would be helpful for their reintegration. The past experiences of survivors resulted in post traumatic disorders in some of them and this sexualized behavior could develop because of them.

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<sup>8</sup>Retrieved from <http://islamqa.info/en/ref/10050>

#### **6.4 Training to economic support and some challenges**

BNWLA shelter home works to develop a survivor not only through psychological training but also with the livelihood training. The first steps of shelter home for my informants was to provide life skills like grooming, personality development, enhancing communication skills, stress management and to some extent leadership. The second part of the process was giving education. Whoever was illiterate was given a minimum of education as it was not possible to admit survivors in schools. It was risky to go to school due to lack of security and to avoid possible abuse from the society people. The shelter home in-charge told me that one girl was going to school as she really wanted to study but she was guarded by someone while going to school or coming back from school. In the shelter home, they gave the survivors literacy trainings and also inspired them to get educated. She informed me that education was really important to increase self-esteem and developing positive self-image.

Another most important session was to give them technical and livelihood training. It was given to make them able to find a sustainable livelihood and develop the survivors economically.

Shelter home in-charge said:

*'We give training on bakery, sewing, candle making, showpiece making so that when they are sent back to family, they can earn and live their own life. We also give computer training to a few survivors as most of them are illiterate or just can read Bangla. Our training helps them to find a good job in future and they can also help their parents.'*

Moriom akhter who was trafficked by neighbors with the false promise of job also told about training-

*'In shelter home they give us training and learn lots of things. We can use it in our future life and also start business if we get monetary support.'*

BNWLA shelter home was a part of the BNWLA anti trafficking program and it tried to make the survivors self sufficient economically. Technical training was planned to ensure good life of survivors outside the shelter home. Moreover, according to the shelter home in-charge's view, survivors got back the confidence that they would be economically sufficient.



The shelter home worked as an important institution to provide the balanced life to survivors with counseling and training but it did not work always to empower the survivors economically. There were different challenges that restricted the economic advancement.

The shelter home in-charge said

*'We faced some limitation that made us bound to train the survivors with small scale income generating activities. I will give you one example. We can give computer training to those who have completed at least primary level or preferably passed 10<sup>th</sup> grades. We hardly find any survivors who have completed 5<sup>th</sup> grade even. We cannot give them mechanical training. It could be more helpful to them but lack of education reduced the possibilities. For this we only provide training on baking, show piece making for decoration where they do not need to be educated.'*

Another reason that hindered survivors' possibility to get sufficient economically was lack of capital due to poverty. This I discovered after talking to the survivors. Survivors were given trainings but they were not helped to start a new business. Generally survivors could get jobs in garment factories where they could utilize their tailoring knowledge.

Jomila said:

*'I got the training but I cannot utilize it as I do not have money to start something. I wanted a machine from BNWLA but did not get it still. They told me that they would give me but it would be late. As I am poor, I cannot do anything except depending on other'*

This was an interesting issue that came out when I was talking to program officer of BNWLA. He said that it needed time to get the machine as BNWLA was depending on funds and they had to wait for funds that would cover the cost of this machine. But they did not get it yet. Moreover, they had to wait for the foreign funding which took time also. In the mean time the survivor was living empty handed. Lack of capital was a general challenge for the survivors. As they did not have money, they could not start a business of their own, even if they had equipped with new skills.

Community people also played another role to trouble women psychologically after reintegration. Of those who were reintegrated in their families, some came back to city and started to work in garment factories. Nasima, Moriom and Momena did the same. They could not

stay in the village as people were talking about them and did not let them live a good life. In the city, mostly they were engaged in low paid jobs and sometimes were not in secured position. If people came to know about their past life experiences, they would be again in vulnerable state, or afraid of losing their job or being harassed by people. In certain situations, it would not be easy to continue their job and become economically empowered.

One more issue worked as a hindrance to the economic stability of survivors. Some of them were not physically fit to do the hard work of garment factories.

Nasima Akhter said:

*'I cannot work in factories as I become sick quickly, I was quite fit before. Now I do not know what happened to me. I asked a sewing machine to BNWLA so that I can work from home and stay at home as my body does not permit me to work there anymore. Still I am working only to survive as my brother is poor also. He cannot bear my expenses.'*

From survivors' interview, I came to learn that physical fitness also was working as an obstacle to continue job. They wanted to stay at home to be able to combine rest and work. For that they needed a larger amount of money that could help them to start a new business on their own. The process of economic empowerment was not easy then.

## **6.5 Discussion**

This chapter outlines the survivors recovering process and the shelter home's contribution to help the survivors to get back to 'normal life'. All of them had faced physical and psychological abuse in brothel and went through counseling for psychological recovery in shelter homes. Life in shelter home was a part of the reintegration process in society which helped them with sheltering, counseling and training. The shelter home management committee had the good intention to help the women but they designed their assistance with the reflection of helping 'vulnerable victims'. They were providing assistance to the 'powerless group' who themselves also accepted that they were powerless.

The study of Wickham (2009) on the rehabilitation of victims of sex trade showed almost the similar psychological problems of survivors that were presented to me by the shelter home in-charge and survivors. That study also mentioned about behavioral changes that completely

overlapped with what I saw. Wickham's study also denoted the need of psychological counseling, education, employment and empowerment of survivors as a part of reintegration. One study of Victoria (2009) on rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked girls depicted the love and support of staffs in shelter home to survivors that could actually help to start a new life or cope with the situation. Kabeer's (1999) theory of empowerment helps to analyze the empowerment process of survivors. She gave a proper idea about agency, resources and achievement. Agency is the ability to decide own goal and also being able to achieve those goals. Survivors with the help of resources (counseling, skill development training, and education) increased their agency. Mosedale's (2003) concept of 'power within' refers to the development of a sense of power to fight the discrimination or stigma. Survivors also developed a sense of power through the counseling to go back to family though they were anxious about their acceptance. Survivors were trained through a routine life in the shelter home with assigned daily activities and counseling session. These activities helped them to connect with other people and bring back trust and confidence.

Sabeebey's (2000) strength perspective depicts the importance of possible interventions that help a powerless group to acquire ability to gain power. His perspective can be used to explain the intervention's of shelter home to develop psychological strength of survivors. Four of the survivors living in shelter home and working in garment factory shared their detailed story with me as it seemed that they had developed their strength to accept their past. However, all the survivors developed self stigma whether living in shelter home or within family. Survivors were given education, physical health check up and psychological counseling to increase the power to fight against the social discrimination. They were also provided with skill development training to develop their economic situation. The process of recovery was not easy but survivors managed to deal with their past memories through the help of BNWLA shelter home's activities.

Sadan's view about the impact of intervention program can be drawn on here to understand the survivor's development of individual strength. The same way I found that BNWLA shelter home staffs were dealing with survivors with patience and concern that had positive impacts in their lifestyle, thinking and behavior. They get many services to relief themselves from depression and isolation. The feeling of self stigma gets reduced by the intervention programs. The SIREN report (2009) also was somehow connected to my study. It deals with the effective reintegration

program of survivors and focused on the need based empowerment programs. The report described the need of survivors from their point of view and also mentioned about the need to think deeply about what survivors needed. I could relate the study with my findings. Some of my informants got the training which they could not implement due to lack of capital and opportunities. An effective reintegration programs would not be stopped only by providing some training. To achieve empowerment, both Kabeer (1999), Saleebey (2006) and Sadan (2000) mentioned the need of resource and professional intervention programs. All survivors could not use their resources to build up agency as the intervention programs could not provide necessary support to them. The achievement was limited due to some challenges like lack of capital of NGO, lack of resource to provide technical training and not being able to follow up all survivors. According to the above mentioned theorists, resources and intervention programs can build the agency or power to deal with the discrimination. However, it is really difficult to gain the power again and cope with the situation. Among my informants two were really silent and sad. They were not lively and spontaneous to give detailed information. It seemed that they could not recover themselves from the trauma of previous life. One was living in shelter home and another was living with family. It shows that some memories are never to be forgotten and intervention programs may not always bring the changes in survivor's life.

The story of survivors struggle does not end here as after the life in shelter home, the most important phase comes and that is reintegration in family and society. In my next chapter I will discuss how BNWLA is processing the reintegration of survivors and what activities they do to make the process effective.

## **CHAPTER 7. REINTEGRATION: THE ROLE OF BNWLA AND PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

The previous chapter has underscored the survivors' life in shelter home in terms of providing normal life, education, psychological counseling and training to economic empowerment. This chapter talks about the next important step of survivors' life, which is reintegration. Reintegration can be understood as the process through which survivors attempt to reunify with family, relatives and society. BNWLA has taken the initiative to unify survivors with family and society after their psychological recovery in BNWLA shelter home. The endeavor to reintegrate survivors in society can affect the survivors, their family or bring some changes in their social lives in terms of acceptance, prestige and power. The social norms and cultural values often make the reintegration process difficult and survivors are prone to face discrimination, violence or disrespect. This chapter is based on the empirical data on the role of BNWLA to activate the process of reintegration, and their strategies to ensure the safety of survivors. The chapter continues by focusing on the role of parents and community people in terms of the girl's social acceptance and reunion in society. Moreover, it brings forth the dilemma of parents and survivors in front of people. This chapter explains the theories of empowerment by Sadan (2000), Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye (1995) and Goffman's (1963) to analyze the reintegration process and perception towards survivors.

### **7.1 Strategy of BNWLA to the reintegration process**

BNWLA is an organization which has been working since 1991 to combat trafficking and reduce violence against women. Reintegration of survivors is the continuous process of anti trafficking program that starts from the shelter home. BNWLA follows different strategies to facilitate the reintegration process. The concern of BNWLA is to provide services to survivors to recover from the past miseries and at the same time it works to change peoples' minds. It has initiated approaches to help women to adjust with new life and also to empower them economically. BNWLA is one of the important NGO's working with anti-trafficking projects for rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration in society.

BNWLA follows the following strategies for the reintegration of survivors that have brought some changes in survivors' life.

- **Maintaining confidentiality about survivors in local area-**

BNWLA as an organization is running the activities to ensure a good life to survivors and also to help them socialized in community. Gaining respect in society for the survivors' is a difficult task if the information about their former experiences are revealed and for this BNWLA maintains the confidentiality in the reintegration process. They communicate with the parents first after the girls come to BNWLA shelter home from Indian brothel. The staff contacts the parents. By that time, the survivors are given physical and psychological health services. If the parents come, survivors go back with their parents. NGO staff while visiting survivors house inform community people that they have given the survivors family a loan from the NGO. NGO staff never reveals the girls past profession to the community people for the safety of survivors and their families.

- **Follow up-**

BNWLA does the follow up after reintegration of survivors in family and society. The staff informed me that they communicate with the survivors to know their condition. If the survivors need security, they provide them with security. Moreover, cash, a cow or a sewing machine may be given to the survivors to start a new business. If anyone wants to study they provide them with books, dress and other study materials. They also arrange jobs in garment factories or other factories for these survivors. Moreover, while these survivors stay in the city to work in garments factories, BNWLA rent a house for them. BNWLA provides free medicine to all the HIV positive patients.

- **Legal support**

BNWLA provides legal support to the survivors if they want to file case against traffickers. There are many cases hanging in court for years. The advocate of BNWLA told me that they are very keen to provide legal support to the survivors without any cost of filing a case. BNWLA runs the case for years. Though sometimes survivors' families get lured by the traffickers and in exchange of good money they settle the case outside the court. BNWLA has achieved success in the prosecution of traffickers and many traffickers were punished with death sentence (Bangladesh Country Report, 2011).

- **Community meeting**

BNWLA works to make people aware of the problem of trafficking. It arranges many community sessions to change people's attitude towards survivors. In every week they arrange session in the most high risk areas. They try to reduce the level of stigma attached to survivors through this intervention. To do so, some NGOs form volunteer groups to raise awareness among people about trafficking.

- **Ensures economic well-being of survivors and preventing the survivors risk of re-trafficking**

BNWLA helps the survivors with skill development training and help them to get independent economically. Moreover, they work to ensure safe accommodation for the survivors living in city or working in factories. They also provide education and awareness to the survivors so that they can prevent their re-trafficking.

## **7.2 Role of the family for adaptation of survivors**

Family is an important institution in people's life and in Bangladeshi communities people are normally very close to their home and their families. The family is the institution that maintains the social customs and helps to transfer the traditional norms of society. For the trafficked survivors, going back to family was little challenging as they knew well about those norms and family values that was absolutely against of their involvement in prostitution. Even if they were forced to do sex work after trafficking, it was considered as a work that was against not only religion but also socio-cultural norms. Survivors found themselves to be in an awkward situation when it was the time to go back to family.

Nargis who was living in a shelter home said

*'I am really anxious about my family and I do not know what I should tell to them. I feel to hide the truth from them as if they come to learn about my prostitution, they will hate me as they are quite religious. I will never reveal the truth to them.'*

Like her most of the survivors felt that they had to hide the information from the family to not hurt the parents and to keep their previous love and respect at home. The girls who went back to

home also did the same thing. All the girls told their parents that they were working in houses as maids in India. It was their one strategy to go back to family easily. But four girl's family knew about it from the NGO staff and they also accepted the survivors. Social stigma was always there but parents mostly came to the shelter home to take back the girl at home.

One thing was clear in most cases, family members were supporting the reintegration of survivors strongly. I felt the emotion of parents for the survivors. They were embarrassed, upset but at the same time accepted their daughter. Survivors were also ashamed of their previous life and sometimes they did not want to face parents. Some of those who went back to families did not want to live with family as they faced some social discrimination and whispering from community members.

Nasima's brother told me

*'People whisper about my sister and say that she was doing 'bad work' there. I have nothing to say about that, I just feel bad. I cannot stop them and also cannot leave my sister. I know it was not my sister's fault and where will she go if I also make her separated from the family.'*

The situation of Nasima's brother gave me the idea of others and I could understand the level of social stigma and emotions of families. It was really difficult for the family members to accept the girl as they had to fight with social norms, their beliefs, religion. The family member's accepted the survivors due to their emotion. I talked to one father and one mother of two survivors who were in Indian custody and were in the process of coming back to Bangladesh. They were badly crying and eagerly waiting to see their daughters. The mother whom I talked, to had her daughter trafficked by her son in law and the father I talked with had his daughter trafficked by the neighbor. I asked both of them about whether they would accept their girls while they would come back.

The mother told me,

*'I do not know what people will say, I just want to see my only child. I can't eat, work when I think about her. I feel like my soul is not with me.'*

The father said,



*'I think people will say some bad things about my girl or I will be humiliated. But still I want my child back. I can't imagine even how much suffering may be she has gone through. I don't want my child to suffer more in India and for this I want her to come back.'*

The parents thus had positive attitude towards their daughters' reintegration in family. They valued the emotional bond more than the social acceptance from the community people. I would not say that they were not bothering about this but they were acting against the community people and also accepted their own deteriorated social position. It was somehow a positive change in terms of reintegration though sometimes the family could not tolerate the humiliation and forced the survivors to go back to cities and work there. I talked to an expert who was working with trafficking issues for the last ten years and she told me that the response of family had changed. She told me

*'When I started working in 1990s, it was really difficult to reintegrate women in family. Parents' were not ready at all to accept the daughters like before in family. I feel that extreme level of stigmatization has changed a little now, though it is going on still in many levels. Still people are concerned with societal norms and values, but they now also consider the emotional connection. It does not mean that they do not face the stigmatization, they do but still they accept the situation and support the survivors.'*

It seemed that due to the emotional attachment of family and awareness rising, it became little easy to reintegrate them in family for few cases. But still parents did not talk about their daughters' involvement in prostitution and hid the information from community people.

### **7.3 Dilemma of hiding the truth**

From the previous section, we got the idea that families now had changed a bit to accept the survivors as concerns raised. The interesting thing was that all the survivors who hide the information about their involvement in prostitution to parents, were pretty much concerned that their parents came to learn about that. From the NGO staff, parents came to learn about this.

Nargis said,

*"I will not say to my parents that I was working in India as a prostitute. They will hate me after knowing that."*

Her father came to take her back home on the day I interviewed her. She wanted to hide her experience from her own parents. Some of the survivors told their parents but parents of survivors were talking only about their daughter's involvement in house work after trafficking. They tried to convince me by saying that their daughters were working in houses and trafficking was done for house work. I talked to the survivors parents who told me that they hid the information that their daughters' were involved in prostitution in India.

One parent said,

*'My girl was working in a house as a maid and she did not do any bad work there. I told to everybody that she is pure but still people whisper about her.'*

It came out from the conversation that the parents were concerned about not only their prestige in society but also about their daughters' prestige. They were always going through the dilemma to hide the truth from the people and protect the girl with a lie. The most important thing was that people did not believe them blindly rather understood that they were lying. The parent knew in the truth in their minds and was showing their double face to people. It was difficult for them to be deceitful and at the same time losing social respect.

One parent told me,

*'People come to my home and try to get information about what my daughter did in India. They ask me always about my daughter and never believe what I say. They talk separately about my daughter's living in India. I do not like it at all that people are curious about my daughter.'*

It was the same for all parents that I interviewed. They were absolutely confused about what to say. The question of people's view point made them psychologically upset and they tried their best to not disclose the information. They were in a difficult state as nobody believed them and they could not disclose the truth also. They knew that if they acknowledged their girl's involvement in prostitution, people would humiliate them rather than showing sympathy. When they hid the information, people were just guessing and whispering about the survivors and their family. If they would know the real thing, they would make it difficult for the family to live in the society. For this reason, parents and family members along with the survivors hid it from the community people and tolerated community people's suspicion.

#### 7.4 Social discrimination

Families' acceptance of these girls' would become more successful if the social discrimination would be less in society. Reintegration or reunification of survivors in family seemed difficult due to the social discrimination. The statements of family members and survivors pointed out the social discrimination they faced so far. Chen & Marcovici (2003) mention that the trafficked survivors are continued to be stigmatized even after their reintegration in the society. Survivors were considered as characterless women who could manipulate other girls of the society. It was the preconception of patriarchal society to exclude the trafficked survivors from the mainstream of society in the name of purity.

Moriom who was trafficked by neighbor with the false promise of job said,

*'When I was rescued, I thought that I came out from the hell but actually I went back to another hell. I went back to village and started living with my family. As one guy from my village saw me in the brothel, he spread the news in the whole village. I was so ashamed that time in front of all. Everybody talked about me; they tried to abuse me sexually. They treated me as a public property and wanted to use me. They had the conception that as I worked as prostitute, I would continue to do the same in my village also. People knocked at my door or window at night. I couldn't sleep nearby the window even as if it was open, people tried to touch my breast. It was so difficult for me. Even my family members were humiliated everywhere. We were not given any respect and people tried to avoid us. My parents were poor but they tried to protect me. When I understood that it would be impossible to live in the village, I came back to Dhaka city and unfortunately got trafficked again.'*

From her interview I got the idea of social discrimination against the survivors and their family. When people were sure about the girls' involvement in prostitution, they could disgrace them more easily. The possibility of violence was increased for Moriom and same happened for rest of others. It was difficult to escape from the social exclusion due to the previous life after trafficking.

Laila was trafficked by her husband and was sold in an Indian brothel. She said,

*'I am living at home now and I just separated myself from others. I do not visit anyone, I do not participate in social occasions. I just live my life alone at home. I do not want to be questioned about my previous life and also do not want people recall about my past. If I go in front of them, they will recall the past and I will be upset again. So I prefer to be alone and sacrifice my social life.'*

Laila was thus excluding herself from the society. In the village generally people love to visit each other frequently. But she had chosen a life for in solitude to get relief from the awkward situation that could hurt her psychologically. She was deprived of her social life just because of the social discrimination performed by the community people. It was almost the same for all the survivors who were living in villages. They did not want to live there just because of the peoples' behavior, attitude towards them and also the possibility to get violated or raped. They had the feeling that because of them their parents also lost the social acceptance and respect. It hurt them psychologically and they excluded themselves from the society and tried to run away from the shame by coming back to the city again.

### **7.5 Community people's perception to survivors acceptance and reintegration in the society**

Along with the family acceptance, community people's acceptance was also important for the survivors. It was also my interest to discover the perception of community people regarding the acceptance of survivors. The literature also demonstrated that stigma is associated with the survivors of trafficking (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Gazi, et. al., 2001; Leah, 2009). Community People had little knowledge about trafficking and the knowledge ended up with the belief that the purpose of trafficking was prostitution. Some of them could realize that women were the victim of deception but also believed that some greedy women went willingly. However, they understood that it was not a good experience for the survivor and also for the community. They were concerned about the deception process but expected the women could have been more careful. Some of the community people could not support those survivors who were lured as they felt those girls would not be so greedy to accept the offer of a better job in other cities or countries.

One community member said

*'We hear sometimes that girls are trafficked. Trafficking is to transfer the women from Bangladesh to other countries. It is done generally for the purpose of doing 'bad work' or doing work in houses. Women who work in houses do 'bad work' with the owner. Society people look at them with lots of question and with bad eyes. They are not like other girls of our society. Why do they trust the traffickers? They are really bad women.'*

Most of the people were not having positive views on mind for those women who were lured. They blamed those women for trusting someone and to go outside of country with that person. They believed that whoever was trafficked in India or anywhere in this world was doing bad work.

I found in my FGD, people also mentioned about involving girls in forced housework and it could be another reason of trafficking from their point of view. Alongside they felt that those girls were also bound to do 'bad work' while working as a maid. The understanding of 'bad work' links with the prostitution and is an indirect way to describe the feeling about survivors' stay in brothel. People feel shy to pronounce the word 'prostitution' and use the term 'bad work' that reveals their feeling and understanding also. 'Bad work' means to do something illegal and unaccepted in society like selling or taking drug, killing people, robbery or doing corruption. However, it is often used in relation to sexual behavior or sexual activities that are highly stigmatized in society. My informants mentioned this term 'bad work' again and again to describe what happened to the trafficked girls after trafficking.

Most of the community people were having a different perception for the girls who were trafficked by husbands. One man said

*'If the husbands traffics the girls and sells her in India to do bad work, those girls must be accepted in society. Let me give you an example. If your husband takes you to Norway and sells you there, it is not your fault. But if you go alone willingly and bad things happen to you than you are guilty. Because you are responsible to protect yourself and people will raise question to you that why did you go alone? You cannot expect positive feelings from people as you put yourself in trouble.'*

Community people were very positive about those women were trafficked by the husbands'. They believed that those women were innocent and it was not their fault. Most of them agreed

strongly that those innocent girls should be accepted in society with respect as they were bound to do the 'bad work' because of husbands' mistake. According to some community peoples' point of view, it was little difficult to forget the past of survivors and for this their acceptance was in question. Some people hold the opinion that the survivors got trafficked because of their own mistake and they deserve suffering.

## **7.6 Discussion**

BNWLA as an organization plays an important role in survivors' life. They follow many strategies to make community people aware of trafficking. It actually helps to increase the acceptance level of survivors in community. The perception of community people towards survivor is not really positive, however, they understand the survivors have done 'bad work' and believe that those survivors can pollute other girls. The concepts of purity and virginity are very strong among people that they can hardly accept girls' involvement in prostitution. BNWLA tries to reduce the stigma in community level but it needs long time to remove the stigma completely.

Following Kabeer's (1999) empowerment theory, we can say that BNWLA works as the medium to develop the agency of survivors. Survivors get the facilities to recover from the previous memories of brothel and participate in the process of reintegration. Through increased the agency survivors can develop their capacity to make choices. Their interest to resettle in life can be considered as a way of expressing agency. Sadan (2000) mentions the three approaches named individual empowerment, community empowerment and professional practice. Survivor's individual empowerment can be achieved by changing community people's mind and professional practice can work as a medium in this regard. BNWLA tries to empower the women by giving the survivors priority and help to increase their sense of power to change own situation. BNWLA works to sensitize community people through awareness raising session to think positive about trafficked survivors' reintegration. BNWLA's intervention programs provide assistance to survivor to increase their self esteem or motivate them to become psychologically strong to live in community again.

Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye (1995) said that empowerment can be understood as the capacity to fight against inequality. According to them empowerment consists of some sub processes that can be used to understand and change the community people's consciousness

about trafficking, reduce the tendency of survivors to self-blame, and understand survivors self-competency and confidence. Intervention methods also help to develop the strength of survivors and help to grow their personal power. BNWLA has designed its program to increase the community people's positive understanding about trafficking. At the same they have provided the survivors with counseling to reduce the guilt and develop the sense of power face the community people. Moreover, skill development training can work as a means to start economic activities. The five components described by Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye (1995) i.e. control, confidence, power, choice and autonomy also help to analyze the level of empowerment of survivors. Control is the ability to have control, confidence is perceiving oneself as confident not a victim, whereas power is the ability to influence own situation. Choice is the awareness about increased option and being able to exercise that, and autonomy is the sense of independence. If we want to use these five components to analyze survivor's level of empowerment, the empowerment state of survivors is not impressive. The intervention programs could not develop all these five components among survivors as some of them may be controlled by family members or NGOs.

Women who are trafficked are perceived as the bad women and they are excluded from the community. Survivors face different forms of challenges while they are reintegrated within their families. Social stigma was the main obstacle for the reintegration of survivors in family and community. Goffman (1963) in his book explains about how stigma is attributed to people. It was perceived by the community people that survivors have gone beyond the traditional norms and became 'imperfect' members of society. Moreover, they possess a distorted character due to their profession that is not accepted by the community people. Community people treat them with hatred and disgust. Due to the behavior and perception of community people, some survivor's do not want to stay with family or reunite in community. Due to attachment with survivors, their family members also lose the social prestige and face humiliation. It contaminates from survivors to their families. My participants from FGD were not really positive about the reintegration as they believe that these returnees might pollute other girls. However, some people were thinking positively about survivor's reintegration. Professional intervention programs are working to change people's mind but it needs long time to accept the survivors in family and community with respect and honor. This chapter stresses on the 'enacted stigma' that is imposed by the community people to the survivors. Survivors face hatred and humiliation that

separate them from other people. This chapter discusses how stigma is imposed on survivors by the community people with the focus of BNWLA's role to facilitate the reintegration. Chapter 8 will focus on how survivors stigmatize themselves or develop self stigma due to enacted stigma or even without facing enacted stigma.



## **CHAPTER 8. REINTEGRATION: SURVIVORS EXPERIENCES OF CHALLENGES INVOLVED**

This chapter focuses on the complex issues that survivors face in a real life when the reintegration process starts. A good reintegration process may work as a way out to help the survivors to experience a good life and forget the past memories. The process takes long time and survivors face many miseries in the process of reintegration. Reintegration means not only gaining the economic self sufficiency but also to live in friendly atmosphere where they can feel as other normal people. Mostly for the survivors to achieve the social and economic wellbeing is difficult due to few opportunities and social stigma. After the reintegration in family or society, survivors come to understand their position in society and get the idea of how they are viewed by community people. In chapter 7, I explained the role of BNWLA to process the reintegration of survivors and parents and community people's perception about survivors' reintegration. This chapter will outline how survivors see themselves in this process of reintegration, and what forms of challenges or influences they face to get a normal life. Moreover, this chapter is concerned with drawing a picture of the forms of violence they are going through after reintegration in society and or in married life. This chapter will describe the survivors' coping mechanisms to live with stigma. BNWLA works for the reintegration of survivors and helps to resettle in family or society. However, this study found that BNWLA's activities for reintegration could not bring complete changes in some of the survivors' life and could not help survivors to be reunited with their communities. This chapter will describe those factors that pose challenges to BNWLA's success in promoting survivors reunification. This chapter uses theories of empowerment from Kabeer (1999), Soloman (1976) and stresses on the stigma theories of Goffman (1963), Link and Phelan (2001), Scambler and Paoli (2008) to analyze the challenges of reintegration.

### **8.1 What happens after reintegration & Underlying challenges**

Reintegration program is considered as an important mechanism to help the survivors in their reunification within family and community. However, the situation of survivors remains in a challenging state after reintegration, caused both by the stigmatization and from their distorted self identities. *“The way how individuals respond to others is very often governed by their interpretation and knowledge of their own self based on past experience, beliefs and values”*

(Mead 1993 in Adhikari, 2011: 78). Their own sense of self is one of the major components that can work both positively and negatively for the survivors. In a negative way it can harm the survivors psychologically and in a positive way it can give strength and help to recover from the stress also. The survivors often create a self image or self identity as the guilty one in society due to the shame they feel of having been a sex worker. Survivors assume that they have done bad work and they are recognized as prostitute everywhere. While living in shelter home also they feel that their returning will not be appreciated by community members.

Most of the survivors told me that they were ashamed of their past work. They were psychologically stressed thinking that if people would come to know about this, it would make their life more miserable. When the survivors returned from the brothel, they reconstructed their image and they felt that their identity has changed. Mostly they were feeling shame and were psychologically disturbed. While they were living in brothel, they experienced enduring psychological health problems and they possessed the perception that they have done the unethical work. The sense of shame they felt actually made them reconsider their self image and it also affected their identity.

Life in shelter home brought many changes in survivors' life psychologically though they endured long term physical and psychological violence in brothel. Some of them became strong enough to accept their previous life, but were in an uncomfortable state while thinking about uniting with society.

Moriom said,

*"I want to go back to my family but my mind restricts me. I know my family will be in trouble because of me and even I will be always in people's mind. They will gossip about me and will ask me thousands of questions. I get scared imagining the situation. The thing that really hurts me is that I am no more like other girls. I am treated as different and a sinner."*

The effort of reintegration program could not bring ultimate change in survivors lives or even could not reduce self stigma completely as changing community people's mind was somehow difficult. All of the women perceived themselves as the guilty one who had committed lots of sins and had lost the good deeds. Luckmann (1966) describes how persons are 'constructed' through the cultural norms or how their social identity is formed. The socio-political factors and norms

define the boundaries of identity that make some women vulnerable in society (Frazer, 1992). Within a patriarchal society such as Bangladesh, survivors understand their position and vulnerability in the society due to the religious and social stigma related to prostitution.

The survivors who had been reintegrated also faced the same social atmosphere where they explicitly experienced stigma from the community people.

Momena said,

*'I had an idea about what people thought about me. I knew that I would not be accepted in society with the previous respect. People teased me verbally and tried to exploit me sexually. I know I have done bad work and I cannot blame others if they do not accept me. Finally I left the village.'*

Like Momena those who were reintegrated in the society faced such situations that made them rethink their past. From the interview with survivors, I came to learn that they thought themselves as guilty, sinner and understood their image was changed among people. For this, survivors did not blame community people for their behaviors towards them. Community people were of course different from each other but some were really reluctant to accept those girls as their ideology was conservative and restricted. Some survivors told that after the reintegration they visited public places either for shopping, visiting people or in different ceremonies. In some cases, they were not questioned directly but they could feel a certain awkwardness due to their presence. The change they could feel was that people were silent about their trafficking and did not behave spontaneously like before. The survivors felt that the people were silent as it is considered as an issue of shame to talk in public and also due to the awareness raising activities in community by the intervention programs. Survivors' also believed that the broaden attitude to accept survivors with respect from the community people could not be expected all of a sudden.

The informants had experienced a powerless situation from the beginning of getting trafficked to the aftermath of reintegration. It was not easy for them to get back to normal life due to their powerless and stigmatized situation.

Jomila Khatun (20) who is now staying at home and got trafficked by the neighbor said,

*“I am living a life that I did not imagine before my trafficking. I have separated myself from others and do not visit others frequently. This is not normal for me as I used to visit my neighbors quite often. Nobody asks me anything but I know whenever they look at me, they recall my past. I feel the shame inside. Now I am psychologically strong enough to accept my past but I know everything is changed. Nobody will look at me now with a normal look. Nothing will be normal like before.”*

Like her, other survivors also felt that leading a normal life like others would not be possible anymore. In the shelter home got back the inspiration to start a new life and got back the confidence also to live in society. However, the social situation and self stigma let them live separated from others. It seems that the life survivors were leading after reintegration was not a completely normal life as there were lots of challenges. The perception of community people towards trafficking victims was different accordingly and mostly it was not in favor of survivors’. Despite the awareness activities of NGOs among community people, they could not get across the conservative perception that forced many survivors leaving villages to city again.

Moyna Begum (20) who is now working in a garment factory said,

*“I was in village with my family and tried to live with them. People were curious about me and my parents faced lots of questions for me. We are poor and I decided to come back to Dhaka again. I wanted to forget the memory of brothel which was getting difficult living in the village. People continuously asked me questions about what I did in India. I of course did not tell the truth but there was too much suspicion. Though I was with my family I was not feeling good and tried to escape from the people. Now where I am working, people do not know about my past and do not ask me any questions. Village people talked behind my back which hurt me. I visit my family after few days on holiday and do not meet other people. It is good for me that I am living in the city and earning money. I wish I could live with my family and visit my neighbors and relatives like before.”*

The interview with Moyna gave me an idea about the challenges they were facing that restricted them to feel the taste of normal life. They understood and accepted that nothing would be like previous normal life and developed strategies to get along with the situation. However, they

wished to live with family, neighbors and relatives but this seemed difficult due to the social stigma.

Kabeer (2005) states that empowerment develops women's sense of self worth and identity and also make them able to change the subordinate status and increase the capacity to negotiate about relationships and to gain goals or power. Studies show that self empowerment can work as an element to recover survivors from exploitation or sexual abuse they have gone through (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008: Wickham, 2009). Self empowerment contributes to survivors' reintegration. The informants have experienced transformations in their life after being rescued from the brothel and after the efforts of the shelter home to give them a normal life. They acknowledged that they have experienced a new life when they returned from India which has motivated them to get back to normal life.

The understanding of 'normal life' among the survivors made me rethink their situation and also about the reintegration process. Normal life means living a social life with others without discrimination, getting equal treatment, maintaining social relationships, participating in social occasions, and giving and receiving equal status and respect in community. The survivors social status and position did not inhibit all these characteristics of a 'normal life' as they were discriminated, treated partially or differently, did not receive respect or in some cases did not participate social occasions. Self empowerment of survivors was difficult. Moreover, the concept of normal life was not fully applicable in survivors' life due to socio-cultural norms and hatred of prostitutes.

## **8.2 Continuation of violence against women**

Reintegration of survivors in family and community is a great step to give them a good life where they can have good social relationships. This step is considered as way forward to get back in normal life or create the situation favorable for them. Reunification in family and community always does not bring happiness or usual success in survivors' life rather it initiates new possibilities of violence. Moriom was trafficked internally and internationally twice.

*Moriom was involved in prostitution in Bangladesh and also got trafficked in India later on. She had grown up in a poor family and she wanted to change her condition by working in city. Her neighbor lured her by promising good job in Dhaka and she came in Dhaka with her. That*

woman sold her in one of the biggest brothel of Dhaka city – Tanbazar. She was tortured at the beginning to start sex work with customers. Moriom had no other option and she could not escape also as the area was well protected. Once some guys from her village came to that brothel and found Moriom. They rescued Moriom and she went back to village. They disseminate the news that Moriom was working as a prostitute. Her brothers were not happy with her. People were always gossiping about her. Living in village became very difficult for her. Some people were proposing her to sleep with them. Her parents and family members were really embarrassed of her. They had lost their social prestige. Moriom found herself in an unsecured position as people would not mind to rape a prostitute. When the situation became worse, she left her village and came back in Dhaka to work in a garment factory. She went to a Mazar (religious place) and met one woman there. They became close to each other in few days. She got the offer of good job in India, Moriom decided to accept the offer and she got trafficked again, but this time across the border.

Her story reveals that her re-trafficking happened because of the social discrimination that made her bound to come back to city. She faced lots of psychological violence after going back home. Her previous life destroyed her present life and also pushed her to destroy the future. People continued to exploit her and wanted to take advantage of her sexually.

Momena was trafficked to India for prostitution though she started to work as a prostitute from Bangladeshi brothel. I gave her background information in chapter 5 to explain how she moved to Dhaka. She was sold to a brothel in Dhaka and was there for three years. She fell in love with one of her customer and they got married soon. She left the brothel and thought that was the end of her life in hell. They were living happily for four years and gave birth of a son also. But after a while the man started to abuse her physically, scold her badly using bad words and did not provide her food and money. From the beginning Momena was not accepted in her in laws family and when her husband changed, everything got really bad.

*‘My in laws family knew about my earlier profession and they could never accept me as their son’s wife. They treated me negatively and hated me always. I never could enter my in laws house and at last when my husband changed, I had to leave his house. I can’t see my son as they don’t allow him to meet me. I miss my son badly and want my son back in my life. I am living a*

*life of a dead person. I tried to contact my husband when I was in India but he did not respond. Moreover, they all snatched my child from me.'*

Marriage initiated new possibilities of physical and psychological violence for Momena and due to her previous life she faced continuous violence from in laws family, husband and society.

### **8.3 Coping mechanism and moving to future**

Trafficking has long term consequences for survivors' life and it is difficult for them to forget the memories. As I have shown above, the endeavor to forget the past gets difficult because of the continuous effect of the previous life in present everyday life. Many studies show that the survivors experience have difficulties with sleeping and also lack the confidence, self esteem and vision for the future (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Voctoria, 2009, Wickham, 2009). The informants in the study have also experienced the same problems in forgetting their past experience.

Nasima said,

*"I want to forget my past which seems difficult as people make me recall the memories. When I face the struggle I recall my past. I want to get married and I know my past will come back in my present life or future life. Day after day I had experienced a hell life in brothel. I wish to erase my past from my life. I am now working in a factory and learnt to live my life. Still something is disturbing me psychologically. I want my respect back."*

The struggle continued for other informants also as they informed me about the problems. The discrimination they face everywhere does not let them forget and create difficulties for their families also. As argued by Gazi et. al. (2001), social exclusion and poverty increase the possibilities of survivor's re-trafficking or push them to move to prostitution. They lack a chance to lead a good life due to people's criticism and discriminating behavior. However, they try to cope with the situation by developing own strength of accepting the social exclusion. Despite the stigma and discrimination, strong psychological supports may prohibit women to get re-trafficked and build the strength to face the discrimination and move forward to achieve economic independency. The interesting thing was the coping strategies of survivors to face the isolation and readjust with others.

Jomila Khatun said,

*'I have coped up with the situation as I made my own world. I do not go to other's place. I do my household work, read my books and spend time with my family members. I will not say that I am unhappy. I have accepted my situation and want to do something for my family. When I hear that people are talking about me I get disappointed but my parents tell me to move forward and not to pay too much attention to others. '*

Like Jomila all the survivors have adopted strategies to cope up with the stigma and have been trying to adjust with the situation. As previously mentioned, some of them have moved to the city to work and developed strength to deal with the community people.

All the informants were facing lot of challenges but slowly seemed to accept their social situation and motivated themselves to develop the future. The thing I found in them was the urge to resettle in future, get married, have children, and earn money. Taking this view into account, the study underscores the positive attitude of survivors towards life and appreciates the psychological power to overcome the stigma or in a different sense to live with the stigma. BNWLA's support increased the sense of confidence among the survivors to some extent and made them dream for the future and be determined to get independent. The social stigma is prevalent in society but some survivors have learnt to live with the stigma. All the informants were very aware of their possibility of re-trafficking and informed me that they would be careful. None of them wanted to continue their life as a prostitute, rather they wanted to regain their respect by working hard in other professions.

## **8.6 BNWLA's Support and Constraints**

This study has outlined the activities of BNLWA; their role in the process the returning survivors, support to psychological counseling, physical treatment, training for economic advancement and personal skill development, all done with the intention of enhancing reintegration in community. NGOs play a significant role to the reintegration of survivors in family society by their awareness program and the support to returnees (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). BNWLA initiates empowerment programs for the survivors' from the shelter home and facilitate the anti trafficking activities in community. From the shelter home they provide psychological counseling and skill development training so that all survivors can regain the



power and strength to meet community people and work for self development. Saleebey (2006) mentions the importance of the strengths perspective to attain empowerment and it is also important to face the life outside of shelter home. Leaving the shelter home initiates a challenge for survivors primarily as they face a new environment that is not favorable towards them. BNWLA cannot ensure their acceptance in society though it has been working to change people's attitude by arranging awareness session weekly. Village people still have the conception that these women may spoil the society. BNWLA is not fully successful to change people's mind or keeping the promise to provide a safe or normal life to survivors. However, it has impacted the life of survivors in helping them to recover psychologically to some extent and prepared them for the reunification in family and society.

However, this study comes up with a particular challenge in the process of reintegration, which is the sustainable economic development of survivors. BNWLA provides many trainings for the survivors to encourage them to get independent economically and to be able to manage own life. The training is in most of the cases given to the survivors for small scale income generating activities and BNWLA believes these activities will lead the survivors to their first step of empowerment. They cannot provide proper technical training due to the illiteracy or lack of education of survivors. The training seemed appropriate according to the survivors but they want more help for their economic advancement. Some of them have received direct help. Moyna Begum and Nasima Akter got the job in garment factory with the help of BNWLA but both want a sewing machine so that they can start working to earn more money. Fatima Akhter got 10000 taka and one cow. She is staying at home and the money is used to maintain daily expenses. The cow is a source of income now as it provides milk and her mother sells milk in community. Jomila Khatun got some money to buy her text book as she started to go to school. The rest of the survivors got training but no direct financial support was provided to them.

Many informants also told me that they could not utilize their skill due to lack of money. They feel BNWLA should give training based on their specific needs for future. All of them did not want to have sewing machine, some wanted to start own small business. Capital was the most important that could help them to utilize the skill and unfortunately most of them did not have it. BNWLA is a nongovernmental organization and they depend on different source of funding. As

the survivors got lots of facilities from them in shelter home and coming back to family, they expected more help to improve and stabilize their economic situation. The economic independency could help them to support the family and also to earn a living. The effort was not completely working as some of them could not improve their economic situation.

Survivors also expected that BNWLA would find jobs for them which they did for some of them. Some informed me that they felt unsecured while living in cities and wanted the BNWLA to find safe accommodation for them. There were lots of things interrelated with their economic advancement. Two of them left the first job given by BNWLA and joined other factories. At that point the organization could not follow up the survivors' status. Sometimes they continued the job given by BNWLA but it was not according to survivors' expectation. They had lived a better life in shelter home with close relationship with professionals' that was missing when they came out for job or to reunite in families. Some of them were not happy about their economic situation and wanted BNWLA to provide more economic opportunities for them with financial help.

## **8.7 Discussion**

This chapter has tried to focus on the realities that survivor faces after reintegration in family or society. Goffman's (1963) dimensions of stigma may help to understand some of the processes going on in the communities. The focus of this chapter is to discuss how survivors develop self stigmatization. When the survivors are tagged as 'prostitutes' due to their involvement in prostitution, community people consider them as a group who has done bad works that is not allowed in society. Survivors had the idea that their previous profession would be known as "discredited attributes" by the community people and created a fear of shame. Following Goffman it can be said that due to the loss equal position in society, survivors' developed the self stigma. They experience the worthlessness, disrespect by the community people who humiliate them severely. It creates the notion of feeling stigmatized among survivors. The same way their parents and family members also face stigmatization and it is a threat to their social prestige. Families are also excluded from the community and it affects the reintegration of survivors.

In addition, in line with Major and O'Brien's (2005) discussion about construction of self, the survivors perceive themselves as helpless, valueless or as prostitute due to the shame they

experience by community people. When survivors experience shame and guilt imposed by others, they lose self confidence and count themselves as useless. They feel they are the burden of family and society where everybody hates them. This feeling develops when they face humiliation and violence from community people as well as from the family members. The construction of self identity is mostly distorted due to the external pressure of stigma. Link and Phelan's (2001) study describes the process of stigmatization and survivors go through the such process. They are categorized and labeled as prostitutes that create a devaluation of self esteem and loss of identity. In married life, they face violence from in laws and husbands which reveal that leading a normal life for the trafficked returnees' is somehow difficult.

The Empowerment approach may help the survivors to regain the strength as mentioned by Saleebey (2006). Self stigma which is well described by Scambler and Paoli (2008) can be reduced by strength perspective. Professional intervention programs help to regain the strength and develop the sense of power. Survivors develop their strength to accept their past and share their experience with others. Reduction of self stigma can help to develop the sense of power and increase the ability to fight against social discrimination. However, survivors have developed the strength to live with the stigma but it seems difficult to fight against the social discrimination.

Solomon (1976) discussion of the coping mechanisms of powerless people can help to analyze survivor's coping mechanisms. Survivors have developed adaptive mechanisms by separating themselves from the community and have accepted people's reaction towards them. They consider themselves as worthless and believe that they have done bad work. They believe that what people think about them is right. This situation makes them unable to fight against the social discrimination and survivors cannot go against the injustice. They do, however, made themselves psychologically strong to accept the past memories and cope with the situation by staying away from community people or moving to another city to work.

Kabeer's (1999) theory can be helpful to understand the use of resources to develop survivors' agency and to explore the level of achievement. The intervention program works as a resource to change women's life and to give them the ability to make choice. Some of the survivors who have come across the stigmatization and moved to city are having a somewhat better life. The survivors living at home are at most risk of stigma and discrimination. Compared to Sadan's (2000) three approaches to empowerment, for the survivors individual empowerment did not

work as the effective mechanism. They could not fight against the stigma and social discrimination. Professionals help was effective to give them back the confidence to get reintegrated but at the same time the process of reintegration was hard. Some of them moved to the cities as living in village was somehow difficult for them as people talk about them. Moreover, survivors needed money to live their life and for this some moved to city to work. Survivors wanted financial help from BNWLA but everybody did not get enough financial support from the intervention program which poses question about the success towards reintegration. However, the empowerment of survivors was partly achieved as it gave survivors ability to face the people, cope up with the situation and dream for a better future.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has attempted to underscore the experience of Bangladeshi women trafficked survivors and their reintegration process in community. The study has discussed the causes of trafficking explaining direct and indirect causes. Survivors shared their experience of their process of trafficking and their experience in brothel. They were physically and psychologically damaged due to the sexual violence in brothel.

Survivors were rescued by police and sent to Indian shelter home where they primarily got psychological counseling and skill development training. However, this study reveals that stigma is attached to these survivors from the time of their rescue. They were recognized as ‘prostitutes’ from the police station and this distorted identity damaged already very fragile confidence of survivors. While they were living in Indian shelter home and were waiting to return to Bangladesh, they started to develop a sense of fear and shame due to their involvement in prostitution.

This study shows that when the survivors came back home, they were sent to BNWLA shelter home. BNWLA facilitated their reintegration in family and also helped them to experience normal life. The survivors who were living with parents were accepted by their families but the perception of community people was not really positive about the survivors’ reintegration in community. Parents were hiding the information that their daughter’s were involved in prostitution and they supported the survivors to start a new life. Community people abused them sometimes and all of them experienced shame while meeting others. People talk about survivor’s changed identity and it creates the sense of self stigma among them. The survivors’ had stopped joining public occasions and four survivors have moved to city again to work and stay away from the humiliation.

This study also focuses on the internal strength of survivors to develop the agency to deal with the stigma. They have adopted coping mechanisms to live with the stigma. They have the feeling of guilt and shame that resulted in self stigma among them. They understand their identity and have decided to develop self economically to lead a normal life. However, things never get normal for the survivors due to stigma attached to them. This study also tries to answer the

question about economic advancement and whether it is the solution or not to facilitate the reintegration process.

### **9.1 Difficulties of reintegration:**

Reintegration of survivors seems difficult in community as they are highly stigmatized in Bangladesh. The trafficked survivors mostly get involved in prostitution, something which is known in community. Religious and social norms do not allow a sex worker or prostitute to be a part of community. They are treated as ‘bad women’ and a threat to society. This perception creates the sense of shame among the survivors that distorts their self identity.

#### **Self stigma**

Self stigma is created among the survivors through the enacted stigma by community people (Scambler and Paoli, 2008) or by developing a sense of shame based on awareness of traditional norms. Self stigma hampers the effective recovery of survivors and it does not motivate them to regain the confidence. All the survivors have developed the sense of self stigma as they know that they will not be welcomed in community. Their past profession is treated as the most devalued work in Bangladeshi society and survivors are also devalued in community. However, stigma hampers the survivors family also as it contaminates them too. The survivors living in shelter home are anxious about their acceptance. In society, they have the fear that even their families might not accept them like before. They get psychological counseling to develop trust, confidence, self esteem but the feeling of guilt mostly remains for long time. Survivors are well aware of their distorted identity and what other people think about them. Due to their fear, returnees living in shelter are scared of meeting community people. Survivors go through counseling to reduce the self stigma but when they start to live in community, they face new challenges. The survivors who are living in village have experienced abuse and humiliation by the community people. People comment on them and try to abuse them verbally and sexually. This situation enacts stigma among the survivors that they cannot fight against the injustice. They start to believe that it is their fault to be trafficked and work as a ‘prostitute’. Because of this sense of self stigma, four survivors among my informants moved to city again as they wanted to get rid of humiliation and shame. Also, they could not get away from the self stigma as

long as they were staying in community. However, when they visit home occasionally, people still point their fingers to them.

### **Impact on self identity**

It is really difficult for the trafficked survivors to forget the past. It becomes more difficult when they encounter rejection and humiliation by the community people. Studies have showed that survivors went through difficult times in brothel. They experience the psychological trauma, lack of self esteem and confidence (Wickham, 2009; Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Shamim, 2010). This situation of self stigma affects their identity and weakens their personality. When they come back home after rescue from brothel and are reintegrated within family, a new phase starts. Community people due to their traditional outlooks stigmatize survivors, which creates threat to the survivors' self identity (Major and O'Brien, 2005).

Stigma damages survivors self respect and leads to the loss of identity (Heatherton et al., 2000). As survivors are categorized in a separate group, they experience status loss. The social discrimination reformulates their identity in a negative way. Due to their distorted identity, they face stigma in community and that seems quite obvious even by the survivors. It becomes difficult for the survivors to forget their past memories. When they face social humiliation it becomes more difficult for them to forget those painful and unforgettable past. The fear of shame and recognition as bad women distort survivors' identity and it hampers the successful reintegration of survivors.

### **9.3 Survival strength: fighting for future**

Survivors have gone through much violence from the time of being trafficked. Their miseries actually did not end after the reintegration in family. They were stigmatized by the community people, and experienced humiliation. However, most of the survivors living in shelter home and also in outside of shelter home have certain level of positive strength to cope with the situation. Those survivors who have been reintegrated with their families have more strong will to lead a normal life. They have adapted some coping strategies to deal with the stigma attached to them. All survivors want to get married and to have babies. They want good life partner though but are scared that their previous profession may hamper their marriage life. Solomon (1976) mentions about the adaptive mechanisms through which survivors separate themselves from the

community people and accept community people's judgment about them. However, this study finds that the survivors' have developed the same strategies. The retreat from the community life and mostly like to move to city to get economically independent. They accept their identity; also they want to resettle in life having a positive thinking about giving life a second chance. The survivors do not want to go back to prostitution rather they want to create a new identity with hard work that will bring them. They understand that regaining the respect will be really difficult but some of them have the positive will to try hard to change their identity and want to forget the past also.

#### **9.4 BNWLA's effort – is economic advancement a solution?**

Economic opportunities are considered as the important mechanism to help to regain the power by the survivors. Different studies have shown that economic opportunities can help to avoid re-trafficking (Wickham, 2009; Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Chatterjee et al., 2006). When survivors come back home, they are again considered as the burden of the family. Due to poverty most of the survivors migrated to cities for better jobs. All of them came back from Indian brothel empty handed. They had got a new motto to live a life while they were given psychological training and skill development training. BNWLA provided assistance to develop their skills to work or arrange own living after living shelter home. Moreover, economic advancement helped them to cope with the stigmatization as they moved from villages. However, no survivors told me that their parents accepted them because of their money though all of them were helping their parents with their earning.

To be precise, it is important to provide skill development training that might help survivors to earn and live own life. On the other hand, it is also necessary to arrange jobs in markets or help them with cash to start a new business. Most of the survivors got the training from BNWLA but could not start their business as they did not have capital.

As I mentioned earlier Nasima said,

*“I wanted to buy a sewing machine as I am not physically fine to work in a garment factory. But I did not get the cash from BNWLA to buy that.”*

Like her, some survivors could not initiate their own business due to lack of capital. In most cases, income generating activities trainings help to motivate survivors positively to be independent



economically. However, the economic independency can work as one major component to give survivors power to regain status in family. Moreover, in cities they can live their own lives without stigma while working in a garment factory.

However, NGOs have started working to reintegrate women survivors in family and society and they have initiated many intervention programs (Bangladesh Country Report, 2011). Stigma is attached to survivors but they can live more independently because of their economic advancement. They can gain the power back to start a new life. Saleebey (2006) emphasizes the need of motivating individuals for self empowerment that helps to form a hope for the future. BNWLA's work had profound impact on the empowerment of survivors and reintegration of women in society. Hemmati (2007) mentions that it is really important to provide the survivors with rights, opportunities and services that are available to the other people for the successful reintegration. To provide them with right and opportunities, BNWLA needs to be more effective to give access to resources and capital. Another important issue is to address the stigma and negative behavior to survivors and it should be discussed in community meetings more precisely. They have to adopt more strategies to make the favorable environment in community for the survivors. This study found that the perception of community people was not properly changed towards the acceptance of survivors and BNWLA has a long way to go to develop the sense of self worth among survivors. It is important to focus on the personality development training along with skill development training to prepare the survivors for reintegration.

However, NGOs should be more careful to focus on the reduction of self stigma and provide them assistance to develop capacities to start a new life. BNWLA has provided assistance to the survivors to develop their economic situation. However, their initiatives have not ensured the sustainable economic advancement of survivors. Economic advancement can work primarily as an important component and BNWLA need to expand their activities to follow up all the survivors situation to ensure a favorable environment for the reintegration.

This study concludes summarizing the following recommendation essential for the successful reintegration of Bangladeshi trafficked returnees in the following way:

- There should be awareness raising programs to have clear idea of trafficking and increase people's consciousness about the impact of trafficking.
- Trafficked survivors should be given various facilities in cash and kind at a broader level to recover from past memories and think positively about their reintegration.
- Formation of more voluntary groups is needed to reach all community people to change their mind. It will help to reduce the stigma and ease the process of reintegration.
- It is important to provide the survivors long term income generating opportunities and follow up to see whether the capital given to survivors is used properly or not.
- Government should collaborate with NGOs and donor agencies to arrange reintegration programs and also advocate the rights of survivors in every spheres of life.

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## ANNEXES

### **Annex i- Interview Guide**

#### I. In-depth interview with Trafficking Survivors

Age

Age at being trafficked

Education

Parents' economic status

Marital status

Husband's age (if married)

Husband's Education

Husband's Occupation

### *I. Experiences of trafficking*

#### **Process of trafficking:**

#### **Main questions:**

1. Can you tell me how were you trafficked?

Did she/ he promise you any benefit?

Did you inform your parents and did they allow you to go?

Where did you go first?

Did you feel anything bad would happen to you?

How many days did it take to reach destination?

How did you reach there?

How many were with you?

Did you understand that you were going to be trafficked on the way to destination?

2. How did traffickers behave with you?

Did they force you to follow his rules?

3. Did you try to escape?

How did you cross the border?

4. Did police check you?

What did you say to police?

What was the trafficker's response to police during checking in the border?

Did the traffickers bribe the police?

When did you know that you are trafficked?

Where were you kept before crossing the border and after crossing it?

What instructions did you get from the trafficker after crossing the border (during way)?

**In brothel (for them who were in the brothel):**

1. How was life at the brothel?

How many days it took to get involved in prostitution after reaching brothel?

Did they make physical violence on you for sex work?

Did you get money from customers or brothel owner took away?

What did you feel at that time? How did you response?

How many days/months did you work there?

2. Did you try to communicate with the police?

Did you try to escape from brothel?

3. Did you go through any sexually transmitted diseases?

**Returning Process:**

1. How did you escape from the brothel?

Which organization helped you to get rescued?

2. How did you arrive in shelter homes/rehabilitation center?

What did you feel when you reached shelter homes?

**Legal status of the case:**

1. Did you file the case?

Which organization is dealing with the case?

How is the case going on?

Are you satisfied with status of the case? Why?

2. What is the status of criminal's punishment?

What punishment do you want for traffickers?

## **Life in shelter home**

1. How is life in shelter home?

How long have you been here?

How do other survivors behave with you?

2. Were you given a timely medical check-up and/or treatment?

Were you given any psychological counseling?

Were you tested for pregnancy/STDs/HIV?

3. Are you getting entertainments in the rehabilitation center?

4. Have you got any trainings/skills?

Are you satisfied with the help you received from the center?

Is there any problem?

## **Perception and possible challenges to reintegration:**

1. Do you want to go back to your family? If not, why?

Have you ever met your family member/relatives/member of your community after you came back from the brothel?

Do you think they will take you like before?

How do they behave with you now?

Have you got any help from your family?

Do you miss your family?

2. Can you tell me how do your community perceive/respond to you?

3. How do you perceive yourself? Why?

4. Do you think your position in society is changed? If yes, mention the reasons.

5. What do you want to do in future?

Do you want to live here for a long time? Why?

Do you expect anything/support from Shelter home for your future life?

6. Do you have any problems? What are they? What might be the solutions for those problems?

7. Is there anything you would like to add or ask about?

Thank you very much for your contribution.

## *II. Interviews with BNWLA's Representatives*

Background information

Name

Sex

Organization

Position/title

Role/duty in program/activity

Information on NGOs Activities

Mission, Vision and Goal of NGO

Target groups

1. What Programmes/activities do you have to reintegrate trafficked survivors’?

What is the length of project?

Locations of programs

Funds of the project

2. How do you measure the major trafficked prone areas? Tell me the indicators.

3. Do you have successful cases of reintegration? Exemplify the cases.

4. Did you face any problems/challenges during reintegration?

How did you solve the problem?

4. Do you follow up of the programs?

5. Do you have any collaboration with other organizations?

6. What do you provide to survivors to be empowered – training, education?

7. What are the future plans/programs to deal with reintegration of trafficking?

8. Do you have any recommendation for the way forward?

Thank you very much for your contribution.

*III. Interview with the shelter home manager/employee:*

Background information:

Name

Age

Education

Position

Role

1. For how long have you been working in this shelter home? Tell me about your experiences.
2. How often new survivors come in this shelter home?
3. With which organization do you have collaboration?
4. Who is funding this shelter home?
5. How do you deal with the newcomer survivor?
6. What the changes you find in newcomer survivors and the old survivors?
7. How long it takes for women to recover the bad experiences they have gone through?
8. Does anybody humiliate the survivor?
9. Tell me something about the food quality, dress up and entertainment.
10. What kind of training you give to women to develop their skill?
11. Are you satisfied with shelter home's activity for women's empowerment?

Do you think shelter home can give a normal life to women like before?

12. Do you feel it challenging to work with survivors?

What kind of challenges do you find working with them in reintegrating?

13. Do you have any recommendation to solve the challenges?

Thank you very much for your contribution.

*IV. Interview with parents of survivors:*

Background information:

Name

Age

Occupation

Economic Status

1. When did you realize that your daughter got trafficked?

How did you feel then?

2. When did you meet with your daughter after rescuing?

What was your feeling when you got the information about her come back?

3. Did you take her back in family?

If yes –

- a. Do you treat her like before or feel ashamed of her?
- b. What were the reasons that you let her go?
- c. Do you think community people are treating you like before?
- d. Are you happy that she came back?

If no –

- a. Why did not you take her back in family and will not take her back ever?
  - b. Did you go again to meet her in shelter home?
4. Do you think your position in society has changed already? Explain how.
5. Do you want her to get back in normal life or if she needs your help, will you help her?

Thank you very much for your contribution.

*V. Group Discussion with community people:*

Background information

Name

Sex

Age

## Occupation

1. What do you understand by trafficking ('Pachar' in Bengali)?
2. Who are the traffickers?
3. What are the processes of trafficking?
4. What are the causes of trafficking?
5. Do you remember any cases of trafficking in the community? Mention.
6. What is your perception about trafficking survivors?

What do you think about taking back the trafficking survivors in community?

What are the advantage/demerits of arrival in community?

7. Do you know examples or women who came back?
8. What would be the solution of problem in reintegration?
9. Do you know about legal provision for trafficking control?
10. Is there any program on combating trafficking in your locality?

What type of program is that and who had conducted?

Are you satisfied with their work?

Do you have any suggestion for that program?

Thank you very much for your contribution.