



# RED LIGHT DESPATCH

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DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

## My Dream To Teach the Poor - Rani Kumari

**Forbesganj:** My name is Rani Kumari and I am 18 years old now. My father is not alive now. I have two sisters and only one elder brother. I am from a very poor, vulnerable and marginalized washer man community. My brother does the job of a washer man and he is the only person who earns the money for the family maintenance. I am the student of B. A. Final year in Mahila College Forbesganj. I have a dream to become a teacher. I love the fabric designing also. One day I hear from my mother that Apne Aap Women Worldwide an Anti human trafficking NGO run a Tailoring Training class in their Jagdish Mill office campus. I came here and met Madhu Didi and Praveen Sir who told me about the details of the class and inspired me to join here. I joined the class on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2016 here and started to learn the tailoring in the guidance of Madhu di. My dream is to be become a good teacher. I decided that when I become a teacher I will teach the poor students who couldn't access the education due to money problem. This is the right to all to get the education.

## Not in My Name!

- Praveen Kumar

**Araria:** Young Junaid and his brothers were killed during Eid, while travelling by train. A group of passengers hurled communal abuses and attacked them after an altercation over seats in a train. At least one of the alleged killers has said that he was egged on by others in the mob who told him Junaid and his brothers ate beef.

On another night, a 100-strong mob attacked a Muslim man on the suspicion that he had slaughtered a cow, after finding the carcass of a bovine near his house in Giridih district of Jharkhand.

There has been a surge in cow-related acts of violence since the Modi government came to power, with one survey calculating that 86% of the 28 people killed in

these incidents were Muslims. One day I received a message over phone from Tinku Di, our Executive Director, that Jan Jagran Shakti Sangathan, an organization in Araria led by Ms Kamayani Swami, has organized a rally in Araria On July 7 at 3 PM from Ambedkar Chowk, Araria bus stop to protest against recent incidents of mob violence across the country that have targeted Muslims and Dalits on one pretext or the other.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Let's Stop Injustice

— Bharti Kumari

**Forbesganj:** The 'Not in my Name' rally was taking place all over the country to protest the atrocities carried out against minorities, especially Dalits and Muslims. We had organized this rally out for a young boy named Junaid, from a minority community. He was travelling by train when a fight broke out. The crowd hurled abuses at his faith and beat him so much that he succumbed to his injuries and died.

These incidents have become commonplace in the country. Rallies all over the country are being organized to protest such incidents and acts of violence. We are conducting these rallies to bring to the

government's attention to these incidents of violence. We want the government to put a stop to such injustices.

The 'Not in my Name' rally took place in every small city and town in the country. We received a lot of support for the rally. The rally in Araria alone had 2000 protesters. 80 girls and women from Apne Aap were part of this rally as well. This was the first time took part in such a rally. I learned lot from this experience. We understood the power of the people. We learned that even a group of commoners can come together to make their voices heard to the masses as well as the government.

## OP Ed: Why the Term 'Sex Work' is Unacceptable

- Autumn Burris

*This letter was originally written to the Executive Director of Un Women in 2013.*

I am writing to you as a survivor of sexual exploitation, and as the Founder and Director of Survivors for Solutions, which offers peer-led services for survivors of exploitation, community education and outreach, and public policy advocacy around issues of sexual exploitation. I was honored to speak as a panelist on the Survivor Panel at the UN Women Stakeholders' Forum on Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women, held on December 13th and 14th, 2012 in New York. I am appreciative to UN Women for this opportunity and for UN Women's commitment to include survivor voices in preparing for the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on the Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls.

However, while I appreciate this initiative, I am also very concerned about the language used to describe me on the UN Women website, as well as UN Women's continued use of pro "sex work" language. After many attempts to correct the language identifying me as a "Sex work" survivor on your website shortly after the Stakeholders' Forum, to date, the language has still not been corrected. I reject this language for the reasons stated below.

To define me personally as survivor of "sex work" is unacceptable regardless of policies within the UN, when this is clearly language I object to and find harmful. I contacted the UN Women office requesting to change this language due to the fact that I never used the term "sex work" in my oral or written statement. I received a written response stating, "...The United Nations does not use the term prostitution but "sex work" instead. This is a decision made at a higher level and after years of discussion." The problem is I do not identify as a survivor of "sex work"; furthermore, this misleading and damaging language is attached to my name describing an identity placed upon me by UN Women. I would prefer to be identified as a "survivor of sexual exploitation". I am concerned with the use of this language both as it relates to me personally and other Survivors world-wide. Most certainly, if I had the opportunity to testify again, I would clearly address this critical language issue. With 15 years of professional experience and 15 years of lived experience in sexual exploitation, totaling 30 years, I reject the term "sex work" and being labeled a survivor of it. My hope is that UN Women will make a concerted effort to reform this

damaging language as it does not reflect the majority of those involved in sexual exploitation in all its forms. The use of language like "sex work" reflects a one-sided, male-dominated position upholding the status quo and fails to recognize that prostitution, pornography, sexually oriented business (i.e. strip clubs) are by nature violence against women and intricately linked with sex trafficking. Additionally, "sex work" language implies that the discriminatory and violent nature of prostitution is a viable form of employment and a choice. Real choice stems from viable options which are not typically available in cases of sexual exploitation, including prostitution. With 85-95% of exploited women wanting to exit prostitution immediately but lacking other options, it is clear prostitution is not a choice and the term "sex work" should not be utilized. The interconnection between sex inequality, poverty, class and racism as it relates to choice is best depicted by Dr. Melissa Farley.

As an agency that promotes gender equality, I expect a clear awareness and informed position from UN Women, understanding that sexual exploitation does not promote gender equality but rather handicaps it. Particularly in terms of the theme for the Commission on the Status of Women 57th session, Eliminating and Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls, I am perplexed by the use of the term, "sex work". The term insinuates that sexual exploitation in all its forms is a viable option for "employment" and delegitimizes the harms, violence, and lack of gender equality inherent in the sex industry and delinks the industry from sex trafficking. Please help me understand how this fits into the mission of UN Women and the theme of Eliminating and Preventing Violence Against Women. In closing, on behalf of Survivors world-wide, I respectfully request that UN Women re-evaluate its position on the usage of this language and take a more survivor-centered approach. It diminishes the majority of Survivors' views that sexual exploitation in any of its forms are not a viable option for employment but violence against Women; therefore, "sex work" should not be used to identify survivors.

## Diary of a Social Worker

### They Call me 'Ma'

- *Sahana Dasgupta / As dictated to Shinjini Chowdhury*

**Kolkata:** Working on field was difficult at first. The women would snigger when I went to speak to them, and walk away. I tried to tell them that Apne Aap wants to admit their children in Ramkrishna Vivekananda Mission. The goal was to take these children away from the red-light areas and keep them in a safe space where they could have a happy, healthy, protected childhood.

The woman believed me. They slowly started to gather. Sometimes, they would bring their friends and tell me, "Can you take care of her child?" That was how our bond grew. They call me 'Ma' now. They have no hesitation in calling me in the wee hours of the night when they are in trouble. One of the girls rang me up around midnight one day and said, "Ma, the police are asking me to go with them. Should I go?" I advised her to refuse to go to the station at night, and to get hold of some local people to scrape out of the situation.

I have spent many an afternoon in brothels. I would sit with them, sleep on their bed. They have

always offered me tea and made me comfortable. I know that if brothel-owners ever try to harm me, my girls will stand by me. I have loved them and treated them like my own daughters. In return, I have received their trust, care and respect.

**"The woman believed me. They slowly started to gather. Sometimes, they would bring their friends and tell me, "Can you take care of her child?" That was how our bond grew. They call me 'Ma' now."**

## Stories

"Teena has been absent from school since 20 days. There is no clue of her. Nobody saw her in the market also. Her mother was seen at the new saree shop opened on the second lane of the market. Teena's mother was buying a bright red bridal saree. Also, many relatives visit her house these days. But Seema, Teena's elder sister is already married. Seema was married off at the age of 12. Now, for whom her mother is buying this brand new saree? Wait. Is Teena getting married? But how? She is just 11 years old. Soon, she will become a mother and will die like Karina of my neighbourhood"- *Sunaina, 13 years old, Perna community*

"Sonakshi wanted to be a doctor. She was a bright girl and use to read all her books every evening. She was only 7 years old. Sonakshi was the youngest child and wanted to study in a big and private school. Her government school teachers didn't use to teach properly. The teachers would come to school and do their own personal work, instead of teaching. On festivals, the teachers would ask girls from senior classes to apply menhdi (henna) on their hands. Sonakshi despite being young in age was observing every thing. She started to get irritate frequently. She could see the circumstances of her government school and inside she was fully aware that if she continue to study in this school, she will never be able to become a doctor"- *Dimple, 14 years old, Sapera community*

## Women are powerhouses: Anti-trafficking campaign at Sonagachhi

— Aruna / as heard by Laboni Basu

**Kolkata:** Life is beautiful. But, I am not so lucky as to know its fragrance. I am Aruna. I am originally from Dhaka, Bangladesh. I have a wonderful family there. My father used to work as a cobbler and mother used to work as a domestic help in our locality. I have two brothers and two sisters. I am the eldest of my siblings. I also used to work in a garment factory, but my income was very less, I could not fulfil my family's needs. I had started searching for new jobs. But having studied till class eight, it was not easy. I was upset.

At the same time, my father lost his job due to bad health and my mother engaged herself totally in looking after him. Can you imagine the difficulties I had to face during that time? My mother expressed her mental agony to me almost every day. I became so confused and feared by that poor helpless economic situation. I decided, I had to earn more money and support my family. My brothers and sisters are so little and unemployed. At that time in my workplace I met with a guy who told me that he had good relation with some garment factory employers, so he can arrange a suitable employment for me in India. I thought, I have to follow that opportunity. I agreed to his proposal and came with him in India. He told me I could earn ten times better than my present earnings. How stupid I was. He brought me in to Sonagachi and sold me for a good amount. He handed me over to a brothel keeper madam known as Santa Masi. I could not understand anything what was happening with me. He told me that Masi will train me for my work. A few days later I realized and that time I did not have any alternative choice. I exploited sexually and mentally. After that I had to save my family at any cost. In that way I drag into prostitution. After that I supported my family by my dust earnings because I had not any alternative

choice. I got married to one of my customers.

Every day I have to meet with several customers there is no colour of life. I used to listen about your NGO from my friend. Once I came with one of my friends in Apne Aap's office. I met with you, Sahana di, Baby di, Tinku Di, and Ruchira di. I heard about Ruchira Di and her work from you and Sahana di. After meeting with her I realized if a woman decided to change the world by her thought and human power, she can. Women are the powerhouse of this earth. We should have to inspire ourselves by this great lady. I have started learning, I also joined in women writing workshop in this center.

I expressed my feeling and thought of writing my own words which inspiring me a lot. I always will be very grateful to Apne Aap, Ruchira di for introducing a new wonderful world with me.

### Did You Know?

#### **In India:**

- There are 2.3 million women and girls in prostitution
- A quarter of 2.3 million are under the age of 18
- There are 1,000 red-light areas

#### **Globally:**

- About 58 % of all cases of trafficking detected globally are purpose of sexual exploitation
- About 75 % of all trafficking victims detected globally are women and girls
- About 20.9 million adults and children are bought and sold for commercial exploitation
- About 1 in 10 men in the world have bought commercial sex

## Creating Our Own Stories

- *Suhana / as told to Khushboo Mishra*

**Dharampura:** My name is Suhana. I study in sixth grade at a Government Girls Senior Secondary School. I live in Dharampura with my parents, brother and a sister. My sister, Sunaina, studies in seventh grade at the same school. She is one year elder to me.

We belong to the Perna community and have very few friends, only from our community. The children from other caste communities do not befriend with us. The men and women from other communities do not allow their children to interact with us as we belong to Perna community.

When Apne Aap organizes programmes in the community, they ask women and children from other caste communities (Sapera, Singhi, general caste, other SC, ST castes ) to come together at the same place and be a part of the programmes. These are the only places and dates when we come in the network of other communities, apart from the schools.

I, along with my sister participated in the story writing session organised by Apne Aap in June and July 2017. A young actress, Priyanka, from New York visited us in the field and school to teach us how to create and act in the stories. Priyanka was just few years older than me. We all felt inspired to meet her.

Priyanka initially created a small story and acted on it with her mother, including two children. On later days, she helped us create and write a story. It used to take 2-3 sessions to write one story. Then we would decide on the roles and act. Generally,

we have seen others perform in the story telling workshops. This was the first time when we created our own stories and acted on it. It helped me gain a confidence to perform in front of so many people and also infused in me the courage to take leadership roles.

**“We belong to the Perna community and have very few friends, only from our community. The children from other caste communities do not befriend with us. The men and women from other communities do not allow their children to interact with us as we belong to Perna community.”**

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## The World Outside

### Meeting Representatives of the German Embassy — *Shashibala / as translated by Khushboo Mishra*

Najafgarh: My name is Shashibala. I am a field mobiliser with Apne Aap at Delhi office. I live in Najafgarh, approximately at a distance of 20 minutes from the community. I am working with Apne Aap since many years.

With my work at Apne Aap, I receive the opportunity to meet various people from all walks of life. I once met Rani Mukherjee when she visited Apne Aap office and sponsored our six children for the dance training at Shiamak Davar Academy. This was during the time when her movie “Mardaani” based on sex trafficking was in the process to get released.

In this month, July 2017, I met the German Embassy Representatives who visited our field in Najafgarh. In Najafgarh, we have adopted MCD Primary School and Government Girls Senior Secondary School where our children who are at high risk of being trafficked are enrolled for their schooling.

Our Government Girls Senior Secondary School adoption project is funded by German Foreign Office. Hence, the Representatives visited our Senior Secondary School to learn how the project is progressing. Earlier I used to be nervous as I only speak Hindi language. But slowly I gained confidence and started to understand English language.

Currently, I understand basic sentences of English but I can write only in Hindi. I am trying to speak in English. I speak broken sentences with different words. I learn new words everyday so that I could converse in English confidently.

The German Representatives were very humble people. They interacted with the girls in craft class, story telling workshop and open mic session. The girls are always curious to know about the culture and lifestyle of different countries. I also learn many things by listening the visitors. In the open mic session, the German Representatives shared the information related to weather, food habits, traditional dresses, time zones, school life, students etc. It was an informative session for everyone.

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#### *(Continued from page 1)*

Holding placards that read “Break the Silence”, “No Place for Islam phobia”, and “Shed Hate not Blood” among others, the protesters said they had gathered to send out a message that they stood united in defense of all those citizens who were under attack.

Apne Aap Women Worldwide India Trust, Forbesganj co-organised this rally. When we conveyed the message to the girls of our Kishori Mandal, they were quite happy and started preparations to join this rally. First off all, they booked an auto to go to Araria! The banner was created by the girls of our organization and many types of slogans were written on it. On 7th July 2017 at 2:00 pm 65 girls and 10 staff members were rushed to the rally. 15 girls with two teachers from our Kasurb Gandhi Vidyalaya also participated in the rally. We arrived at Araria at 2.45 pm. After reaching the venue in Araria, we stood with all the people in a queue for the rally. About 2000 men and women from many organizations and communities participated in the rally. Everyone held a poster in their hand. Police personnel of Araria was present

there to maintain law and order. Everyone tied black cloth to their hand to express solidarity.

The rally started from Ambedkar Chowk of Araria, travelled through many places of the city, reached Chandani Chowk and converted into a gathering. Here, the intellectuals of different organizations expressed their thoughts and protested against the wrong policies of the government, demanding to stop this kind of violence immediately. This rally lasted approximately 3 hours and ended in the evening at 6:00 pm.

This was a big and successful rally and conveys an important message to the society. We enjoyed it was proud to be a part of this kind of event.

## My First Day at Apne Aap

— *Ashmeet Bhilkhu*

**Delhi:** I, Ashmeet joined this organization in July 2017 as research associate. Interviews always provoke an uncanny feeling over me; from academic appointments to prospective job they put me to my toes. Therefore I came here after reading the standpoint of Apne Aap Women Worldwide on ‘prostitution’ as a matter of fact but my academic research which is on violence against women attracted me towards themes and issues this organization is exploring. Anyhow, I decided to keep my questions and dilemma alive when I came here looking not just ‘work for survival’ but also to assimilate my academic qualifications to provide me some ‘meaning’. So, I came for my interview to answer the usual round of uncomfortable questions regarding why this, how and what of that, but as I entered, scheduled interview between me and my supervisor/colleague and now a friend ‘Juanita di’ as fondly called by all of us, turned into a meaningful discussion, sharing of our thoughts and aligning them into ideologies operating our modalities of work. By the end of it I was able to see through my questions and appreciate the perspective of apne aap to work with the system than merely individuals.

Hence, I was recruited and picked up my first work assignment which allowed me to read up on various discourses and debates over prostitution, I winced at my learning and academic training. Human trafficking and prostitution is a pool of ocean filled with sheer complexities and various socio-cultural networks. It is largely an ignored patch in the popu-

lar understanding of violence against women, not just bodily violation but also mental, emotional and psychological. To my aghast, I realized that prostitution is not a choice but rather an absence of choice and transgression of right to work and dignified life. I saw it as web of violence which is enmeshed in all spheres of lives of women who are involved. The very idea of recognizing sex as ‘work’ indicates absence of opportunities which cannot encompass people from various socio-economic backgrounds into conventional and well balanced order of work life. It rather reflects at the pathetic conditions in which there is nothing left but the body of a woman which feeds and shelters those related to her but rendering her own existence in question and vulnerability.

Whereas my training around progressive studies bend me to inculcate forward moving ideas of equality and liberty, to understand women in the choices she is making. At Apne Aap, with its work, it enabled me to locate patriarchy and its forces through otherwise unknown dimensions known to me. I realize apne aap is taking the spirit of women’s movement forward which began in India in 1970’s on the issues of sexual violence and expanding its engagement by bringing in various discourses around violence. Resisting the validation of prostitution and creating the system for equal opportunity of work is more in tune with the ideals of feminism which benefit men, women and children alike.

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The Representatives also visited the library where the books were covered in dust and no child ever visit the library due to its dull environment and boring books. The German Foreign Office also provided a bookshelf and 100 attractive books for the children to the school authorities. Apne Aap had also organised a reading session in the school where children read short stories from these books.

I also visit to Oz Haat Mela, organised at Australian High Commission every year. In the Commission we showcase our products made by the survivors. These experiences teach many things and bring confidence in me.

**“With my work at Apne Aap, I receive the opportunity to meet various people from all walks of life. I once met Rani Mukherjee when she visited Apne Aap office and sponsored our six children for the dance training at Shiamak Davar Academy. This was during the time when her movie “Mardaani” based on sex trafficking was in the process to get released.”**

## Poems

### We have exam

Year is over, exam has come  
Let's study together.  
Had a lots fun during the year  
Now feeling like a cry.  
If we would learn  
During the year,  
Don't need to feel like crying.  
Now have to study hard.  
Will not be scared of exam.  
We will get a good score  
We will show how good we are.

**Name: Kusum Shaw**

**Age: 13**

**Area: Khidderpore, Kolkata**

### Daughter

Do not consider them a burden,  
They are actually pearls of ocean  
Love, joy and happiness they bring  
With them wherever they go,  
Also bring light over the dark,  
Sorrow becomes happiness.  
Treat them like sweet flowers.  
Their soft soul get melts soon.

**Name: Karina Jha**

**Age: 12**

**Area: Khidderpore, Kolkata**



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## Red Light Despatch

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