

### RED LIGHT DESPATCH

**VOLUME VIII, ISSUE 9** 

SEPTEMBER, 2015

DELHI, KOLKATA, AND FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

# My Dream "To become a doctor" -Sushma, aged 14

Kolkata: My name is Sushma Jha. I am 14-year- old. I, and my family live in Khidderpore, Kolkata. I am studying in class VII at Lajpat Balika Vidyalay. I aspire to become a doctor.

One day, I want to be able to build a hospital, where I can accommodate poor people. As I know of many people who are not able to afford the medical expense, due to which there is negligence on the part of the doctor.

Hence, every day I am mentally preparing myself to take this profession and help as much as I can for them. I dream of curing the illness of poor people who are living both in rural and urban villages. When I am alone, it breaks my heart to see them being so helpless. It is not the fault of the underprivileged people that they cannot afford to either spend on medical bills. They do not even have enough saving for the daily expenses. It also makes me question on why the doctors became so money minded. I want to serve for the girls who are last among the last, and also mankind in general.

I am a student, associated with Apne Aap Women World Wide since some time. And I would like to thank Apne Aap from the bottom of my heart, especially for helping me to visualise my dream and showing me the path on how to achieve it.

#### Apne Aap Survivor gets into Child Welfare Committee

#### — By Mohd Kalam

**Bihar:** I am Mohd Kalam. I am a survivor. I belong to Nat community. In our community inter-generational prostitution still prevails. Here, the girl is groomed to be a prostitute and boy to a pimp.

I was selected as a member of Child Welfare Committee, Araria in July 2015. It's an extremely proud moment for me. Apne Aap Women Worldwide, an anti- sex trafficking organization gave me the platform in 2003, where I could help my community members against such practice.

I gave 12 years of my life to the community people, to help break the cycle of inter-generational prostitution in Bihar. This was the first when the Bihar Govt acknowledged my effort. Earlier, I had never witnessed a survi-

vor like us being honored by the Bihar govt. For the past 12 years, my life was full of obstacles.

In our society, people do not accept our lots in decision making body. They also avoid raising the discrimination and exploitation issues, as they believe that this will expose state's failure to deal with it.

I am eternally grateful to my mother and sisters, who have sacrificed so much in their life for the betterment of my future. I am thankful to the prostituted women, who underwent traumatic experience, still showed courage to exit from it.

(Continued on page 6)

### Story of a survivor: She built her dream house outside redlight area

—Fatma Khatoon/ as translated by Praveen Kumar

**Bihar:** My name is Fatma Khatoon and I got married when I turned nine-year-old. I was born to a Nat community. In our community, some of the girls are pushed into intergenerational prostitution. I was married off even before I understood the meaning of it.

My husband is more than twice my age. I am his fourth wife. Before me, there were other wives, who passed away. I eventually understood the process of how a girl is sold and pushed into prostitution. Even to think of my situation, it emotionally destroys me, from time to time.

On those initial days of my marriage, I saw some girls being sold off by the pimps. My husband was also playing the role of a pimp. It took sometime for me to realized the scenario. With time, I understood. It broke my heart. I wanted to help the girls. I felt helpless. But, I promised to myself that one day I will save these girls and help them escape from the bondage. After two-three years of my marriage. I started the process of rescuing these girls. I was repeatedly beaten up by my husband and the family members. I did not give in. Finally, a day came when I succeeded in rescuing three girls from my home, who were kept as a captive by my husband.

(Continued on page 7)

#### Op-ed: Ruchira Gupta's Column on the Outlook India Magazine

Ruchira Gupta is a writer, feminist campaigner, professor at New York University and founder of anti-sex-trafficking organization Apne Aap Women Worldwide (www.apneaap.org) Twitter: @ruchiragupta)

Every person I have spoken to this week, has confirmed that they know someone who employs children or pays less than minimum wages to the adults that they employ. They have also acknowledged that they eat, drink and socialize with such people and mostly stay silent when they notice or hear of physical or sexual abuse.

So why is the story of the two Nepali women being beaten, starved, raped and locked up by a Saudi diplomat in Gurgaon for four months so outrageous to the same people? Perhaps it is that knives were used, the women were raped, or the physical locking up that is repulsive?

Or perhaps because the incident is easier to object to. The perpetrators are not the people we know. They are Saudis. Our people don't go so far. They don't rape the maid, don't beat and stab her or lock her up. The grim truth is that many of our people do.

Dhananjay Singh, a Member of Parliament, was caught covering evidence after his maid was murdered just two years ago. Our very own diplomat, Devyani Khobargade, had enslaved an Indian maid in New York a few years ago and had claimed diplomatic immunity to escape punishment. She still holds a senior rank in our bureaucracy.

The fact that both the MP and the civil servant have got away creates not just a culture of impunity, but, a culture that normalises enslavement.

Slavery is no longer people in chains, transported in ships from Africa to America. According to the UN Trafficking Protocol, slavery is about people who are subjugated, held in bondage, of people having to work very hard without proper remuneration or appreciation, and "a legal or economic system in which principles of property law can apply to humans so that people can be treated as property, and can be owned, bought and sold accordingly, and cannot withdraw unilaterally from the arrangement".

It exists all around us -- in girls who are sold into child marriage, debt bondage, prostitution, forced to become surrogate mothers, domestic servants, contract labour, or boys sold into contract work and cheap labour, working in construction, in restaurant, vending on streets, in quarries, in mines...

If we were told we are part of the slavery system, we would shudder. But it is our complicity that is the first step in creating a culture that normalizes slavery. We turn a blind eye when in every apartment block or residential colony we see domestic workers who may not get weekly offs, paid holidays, food at proper mealtimes, or a proper place for their staff to sleep in, let alone, god forbid, a minimum wage.

Many of us employ domestic workers through "maid agencies" some illegal, some legally registered. We knowingly

allow them to keep a portion of the maid's salary.

Delhi has 700 legal registered agencies, and 2,000 unregistered, illegal agencies that cannot be regulated by government authorities or domestic workers associations. If at a modest estimate each agency brings a 100 girls/women to Delhi every year, we are talking about the trafficking of 200,000 girls and women to our capital alone.

Gurgaon does not even have a law to register or regulate the employment agencies. Many of India' burgeoning corporates live in the high-rises of Gurgaon. They negotiate well for raises, perks and protections in the companies they work. There are sexual harassment committees in all the offices, as well as regulation of pension plans, wages hikes, working conditions, rest and recreation, crèches for children, gyms, and health care plans.

Yet, very few of these residents have established norms in their building or advocated with the Haryana government to create protection mechanisms for the domestic workers that their lives are based on. They do not question why municipal authorities insist that apartment blocks have places for cars but no room for domestic workers.

We register domestic workers with the police to protect ourselves, but never think of registering the domestic workers with the building security to protect them from abuse. Imagine if the two Nepali women were required by law to meet a building or colony security guard to report her well being on a periodic basis. They could not have been abused so easily.

But we do nothing. We ignore the plight of women, whose lives are so intertwined with ours. They bring up our children and have brought us up.

The greatest tragedy, however, is that the new BJP government has also begun to believe that poor, female, low-caste, teenagers are disposable people. A Delhi BJP spokesperson recently told me he was obliging poor children by giving them shelter and two meals a day in return for working for him. He was ignoring the larger truth that, in fact, they were giving him a clean home and cooked meals. And that in any case they should be in school.

Recently the BJP government got the Cabinet to approve a Bill to allow Child Labour in the audio-visual entertainment industry and in family enterprises. Everybody knows about the sexual exploitation in the entertainment industry and yet the government has opened the floodgates for vulnerable children to be legitimately used in this and in "family enterprises." In the work that my NGO does, we have often faced fathers running home-based brothels. At the same time, the government has cut mid-day meal schemes, low-cost boarding schools, and other social supports for children making them easy prey to traffickers. The NCW chairperson appointed by the BJP has even said that prostitution should be legalized in India. Since adult women can legally sell her body for sex in India already, the only part of prostitution that is illegal is pimping and trafficking.

#### Diary of a Social Worker

#### —By Juanita Kakoty

Delhi: Words have a lot of power. They help us think and express; and they help us to reach out. Apne Aap works at the field where we try to touch lives positively through direct and indirect intervention, and at the level of advocacy where we take the help of words to bring about change. So whether be it policies, laws or mindset, we use our newsletters, studies and reports, and publications to reach out to people and sensitise them about the harm that trafficking for sexual exploitation causes.

Since the time I joined Apne Aap, I have been involved with the Topsia Report (that was released in August 2015) and the ICSSR reports. **The Topsia Report talks of how unplanned and forced eviction can push already deprived people into destitution.** The said eviction happened in Topsia, Kolkata in November 2012 and the displaced people are still looking for help.

All of these affected people are poor and without resources to a dignified living. They are rag pickers, rickshaw pullers, scavengers, etc. Many have shifted to places like Ghutarisarif where two kinds of brothels run. And all of them have lost the network of support that was woven around them by Apne Aap, CINI Asha and the Topsia Church that was working in the area to help the community become self-empowered. With our report, we hope to bring the voices of this affected population to concerned authorities so that something could be done. We also hope that such a report will discourage state authorities to carry out unplanned and forced evictions in the future. We should not forget that people are people, poor or rich.

In 2014, Apne Aap had conducted a survey with the support of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) in six states of India – Jharkhand, Odisha,

West Bengal, Bihar, Delhi and Rajasthan – to assess the educational status among the freed/denotified tribes. In this study we found out that the poor educational status of these communities is directly linked to their socio-existential conditions and how they are vulnerable not only to be historically marginalised but also to trafficking for various reasons such as prostitution, child labour, organ transplantation, etc. This study is first of its kind in the country and we hope we come up with more such studies in the future. The six reports have also charted out extensive recommendations to better the lives of these communities.

Right now, I am working on an anthology which will try to humanise the prostituted woman. This anthology will carry short stories around the theme of prostitution by eminent modern progressive writers in India. All of you can look forward to it early next year!

Next year, we are also hoping to start a bi-annual journal on women's studies with SAGE publication. So we are looking forward to an exciting new year where we will use words all the more to reach out manifold and affect lives at a greater level.

In this study we found out that the poor educational status of these communities is directly linked to their socio-existential conditions and how they are vulnerable not only to be historically marginalised but also to trafficking for various reasons such as prostitution, child labour, organ transplantation, etc

#### Continued from page 2

Does she want pimping and brothel keeping legalized? The Nepali women were simply repatriated to their villages after the "rescue". They were once again faced with hunger and homelessness, and rejected by their families. They are very likely to be considered "devalued" because they have been sexually abused. This time they will be prey to sex-traffickers.

Had the Indian government really wanted to be accountable for its failiure to protect migrant workers from exploitation, it could follow international best practices designed for victims of human trafficking.

The US does not repatriate victims of human trafficking, recognizing that they cannot be endangered again. It gives them a T-visa to stay in the country as well as housing, legal, livelihood and health support. In fact, a

girl from Gujarat, trafficked by the entertainment industry, is in the US on a T-visa right now.

The great India model is being created by a new regime that believes that the poorer class of human beings deserve less, especially if they are female. What happened with the Nepali women in the Saudi diplomats house is happening in apartments and homes across Gurgaon with women from our own country -- from Jharkhand, West Bengal, the Karnataka-Andhra border, Orissa and north-east.

The black and white case of the Nepali women in a Saudi Muslim diplomat's house is more palatable to talk about. Enslaving the two adult human beings in one apartment is only possible, because our regime is creating a culture to legitimise the exploitation.

#### My First Day at Apne Aap

#### -Rhona Scolt

**Kolkata:** My name is Rhona Scolt. After a long tenure spanning over 30 years with the medical and gases industry, I wanted to dedicate my time now to reaching out, in some small way to the less fortunate, especially children. I had mentioned to a friend of my interest in working with children.

The very next morning, my friend called me during her morning walk and put me in touch with Mrs. Lata Bajoria, Trustee and Treasurer of Apne Aap Women Worldwide India Trust (AAWW). After a brief meeting with Ruchira and getting to hear about Apne Aap and its reach out activities, a quick drive around the Munshiganj Red light area and a visit to the Kolkata Shashtitala Cenre, I realised this was exactly where I wanted to be.

I joined AAWW on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June and received a warm welcome from the Kolkata Team. They introduced me to a whole new world – the real world. Later, when Lata arrived with the Deputy Consul General of Germany and other officials from the German Consulate. I was introduced as the new General Manager. I accompanied the guests around the Centre. We were introduced to the Education Centre and the children, the IGP Programmes – the Tailoring and Jute Bag Section, the Sanitary Pad Unit and the Kitchen, where they were preparing the mid-day meals for children. There was so much happening and so many happy faces. It was just such a positive feeling overall! The officials from the German Consulate were very impressed and so was I.

An hour later, Kalpana Kaul from Womanity Foundation, Geneva, arrived at the Centre and was shown around. In addition to the visit to the Shashtitala Centre, Kalpana also visited our Sonagachi Centre. This was truly an eye-opening experience for me. I had heard and read about Sonagachi, the largest Red Light Area in

Asia, but had never visited it. I met Keya, a WIP, and Rumki, a Survivor's daughter, who work at our Centre. I was very impressed with Keya – the way she looked and how she carried herself, her confidence and the touching honesty with which she shared the story of her life. During our conversation, I discovered that she teaches the children from the RLA of Sonagachi at our Centre. She is now looked up to and respected by the children she teaches and their parents for the work she is doing. She told us how Apne Aap is educating her son in RKVM and how grateful she is for this help.

I gained knowledge about the other activities initiated by Apne Aap. For instance, the excellent new avenues of income generation – the knitting school, the bakery, valet drivers and many more - offering employment to hundreds of women. The unique Last Girl 10 x 10 Approach and Asset Card that has helped empower women, the legal assistance and IDs/Government schemes, the residential school projects, e-buddy projects and so on.

It was then that I realized, there are no rules or borders for reach out. This is a real organisation with a real purpose – to free every little girl from the fear of being trafficked and from slavery. To let her dream her dreams and create a way to make those dreams come true.

I too have started dreaming now. Dreaming of a new world where everything is bright and beautiful, where the birds sing and the flowers bloom and where every little girl is free from slavery and does not have the fear of being kidnapped and trafficked or molested – where she can dream and her dreams can come true.

Every day, we make each other feel important and so wanted.

#### 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

#### Apne Aap Ten Assets app training in Forbesganj

#### —Jasneet Kaur

**Delhi:** I am Jasneet Kaur. As part of my advocacy and programme activities, I visited Forbesganj to participate in the five days training of the CommCare application. It is also known as Apne Aap ten assets app, developed by Dimagi.

The launch and training of the CommCare application was conducted in Forbesganj, Bihar at the Apne Aap centre from August 24 - 28, 2015. Maryam Khalid from Dimagi Foundation took us through the training process step by step, in a very interactive and interesting way.

With support from Dimagi Foundation, an organization which works to provide technological services and support to the underserved communities, an android powered mobile application called CommCare has been developed.

Apne Aap Women Worldwide with a view to make programme reporting and monitoring simpler and more efficient, decided to enable a digital platform for the 'Asset Card'. An asset card is a tool which quantifies how many assets each beneficiary has received along with its date of achievement. Apne Aap's 10 x 10 approach lists 10 assets which gradually work to empower a woman and reduce her dependency on the brothel/trafficker. The lists includes safe space, education, self confidence, political power, Government IDs, Government subsidies, savings and loans, livelihood linkage, legal empowerment and membership of a self empowerment group.

During day one of the training, the Program Officers handling programs in Delhi, Bihar and Kolkata were briefed about Dimagi – the organization, its mission and reach, the mobile application, its uses etc. The day ended with all the team members making flipcharts and images for the community mobilizers to understand better the next day.

Day two of the training focused on a step-by-step introduction on how to use Apne Aap ten assets application to the community mobilizers. After getting their hands on the mobile phone and the basic know-how, they learnt the registration of beneficiaries and updating the assets.

The following day we were all excited to experiment with the application. We were divided in different groups. We went to Uttari Rampur, the Red Light Area in Forbesganj, where we approached each household and tested the application. Dealing with minor glitches and challenges, we managed to use the application successfully.

The last day of the training focused on the monitoring of data on the server as collected by each community mobilizer. We discussed the various methods to filter data, evaluate information and how to use it.

We are thrilled to use the Ten Assets application. It'll make it easier for us to register the number of beneficiaries and keep track of the impact our organisation is making at the grassroot level.

## Follow us on www.facebook.com/apneaap www.twitter.com/apneaap

Write to us for any queries or comments at contact@apneaap.org contact@apneaap.org



# The World Outside 'Girls and women participating sessions on Juvenile Justice' —Sudha Devi/ as dictated to Fazul

**Kolkata:** My name is Sudha Devi and I am a resident of kidderpore Nitya Ghosh Street, Kolkata. It has been nine wonderful years of my association with Apne Aap. I actively participates in different campaigns and activities championed by the organisation.

These days, even my daughter, come here to learn on how to make Jute bags, bangles, learn traditional dance. There are many other activities of Apne Aap, where I love to show my solidarity. This includes legal sessions on different laws on trafficking and on women and child related policies.

Last week Fazul da told us about Juvenile Justice Act. How it is important to have the knowledge about this act. He told different provisions of the act like who is juvenile? What is the jurisdiction of Child Welfare Committee or Juvenile Justice Board in this act, where we can inform if we found any abandoned or orphan child in our locality? Also, we came to know that ordinary people like us can appear before Child Welfare Committee (CWC) to inform them about any children who is in danger or deserted.

Now, we know that which child is referred to as 'child in need of care and protection'. Fazul da also told that no child can be tried in a Sessions or other court room.

As it is done in the cases of other criminals. Here, according to the law, the minor accused has to be tried in Juvenile Justice Board. We were educated about the role of Police / Special Juvenile Police Unit and NGO to protect the children from any kind of violence.

The session was very informative and interactive. We learnt many things from the session. We shared our past experience about child abuse and abandoned child. I am thankful to Apne Aap for arranging such informative session for the girls and women.

These days, even my daughter, come here to learn on how to make Jute bags, bangles, learn traditional dance. There are many other activities of Apne Aap, where I love to show my solidarity. This includes legal sessions on different laws on trafficking and on women and child related policies.

#### Continued from page 1

To those mother who have decided to send their children to schools for a change. To those girls who were determined to stay put in hostel, in an effort to keep away from their houses, which is located in redlight areas.

I am forever grateful to people who saw my potential and supported me in the initial days of my struggle. This includes the Former District Magistrate, Araria, my former school Principal and my college friends. They helped me get through my schooling phase.

There are end number of people. My utmost respect to Babuji (Ruchira's father) who has given me moral support. Love and affection for Apne Aap members: Tinku di, who stood by me shoulder- to-shoulder to deal with all the problems life has had in store for me. I appreciate that she extended her support in a more personal and individual level too. I am most grateful to Ruchira di, her vision of a place where no girl is bought or sold, has deeply inspired me.

Also, I am awed by the exemplary bravery and courage shown by Meena and Fatima, on their sheer determination of standing up against the traffickers and local goons.

I have started my work at Child Welfare Committee. I believe I have been bestowed a very responsible position. On initial days, there were some people who were unhappy of my being selected and tried to bring me down based on a fake case filed against me. I was sad. I felt that I was harassed for no fault of my own. I tried to reach many people, but with no response. I made up my mind that it does not matter for how long I am in CWC. I will try to make a difference with my presence in CWC, and like always, I would try to ensure a better future of the children.

For instance, I'll make sure that the schools take responsibility of enrolment of the children from redlight districts. Also, that they attend classes regularly. KGBV have to ensure that girls from nomadic/untouchable communities' are included in it.

I want to create a space where there is no child labour found in hotels, shops, and even at homes under the guise of maid in Araria district. I will meet judiciary to discuss about the illegal adoption of child and sensitize them about trafficking cases. And, I wish one day, the society will come to realize, child labour is a criminal offence, and the authorities take it upon them as a moral responsibility to free the child.

#### Participation of Freed/de-notified communities at the premier of Vimukti

#### Delhi:



Apne Aap hosted the screening of Vimukti: Memories of Dust, Sounds and Agonies on September. August 31 is celebrated as Vimukti Diwas by formerly nomadic groups that were labelled as Criminal Tribes under British Colonialism. Vimukti Diwas (Liberation Day) is the day that the British Criminal Tribe Act was freed/denotified when India became Independent. Of this, 16 such groups remain so marginalised that they are trapped in intergenerational prostitution.

#### Continued from page 1

Later, I heard about the organization Apne Aap Women Worldwide, which is working in this area against the traffickers and to save the lives of the women and girls who were trapped in prostitution.

Ms Ruchira Gupta, Ms Tinku Khanna and Md Kalam helped me to escape from this place. After associating with Apne Aap, my story was published in the monthly new letter 'Red Light Despatch'. My family members got to about know about this and I was brutally beaten up and thrown out of home for a month. This made me stronger and more determined to continue my battle even with all the hurdles. I wanted to rescue more girls and assist the police in arresting more number of traffickers.

Later, with Apne Aap's help and to further the organisation's vision, I formed a group for those women trapped in prostitution and also a Kishori Mandal for their children.

Very recently, I got the life time opportunity of participating in Kaun Benega Crorepati and share the hot seat with bollywood actress Rani Mukherjee. I also met Amitabh Bachhan there.

It was a life changing event for me. During the game, I won Rs 21 lakhs. For many it might be just some lakhs, which they can spend on some new cars or electronic gadgets. For me, it was more than a dream becoming reality. Some dreams, which I had dreamt as a little girl and some dreams, which I dreamt on behalf of my children.

I always wanted a small house outside the redlight area. I

grew up in Forbesganj redlight area and I never felt comfortable with the stares from strange men around. I did not want my children to grow in the same environment. I want them to feel safe when they step outside the house, any time of the day. Hence, the first thing I invested from that amount is buying myself a plot of land, outside the redlight area and constructed a house. I used it as an exit route to stay wherever I feel safer.

Life was different here after. I won some prestigious awards, including 'Nirbhaya' award from Salaam India, 'Women Empowerment Award' from the Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr Nitish Kumar.

In the middle of all this happening, I was torn. I was still the same little girl, who had once dreamt of loving and being loved by a man of her dream. I fell in love with a man, a social worker. I loved him ardently. My grown up children knew about him. I shudder to think about what my family members would think of me after knowing it. I felt helpless; trapped by his love. Somewhere I imagined that I could understand the pain of a person, who were harassed and was so consumed that couldn't express anything.

However, for the love that I risked upon my children, family and even my husband, never materialized. The pain was so unbearable that I tried to commit suicide many a times. We had some misunderstandings. Finally, I was out of his life. I am a woman, unlucky with love: I could never receive love from my parents, family members, my husband, and even from the person whom I had loved wholeheartedly. He was my almost relationship. Now, I will continue to fight for the underprivileged girls and women from our community.

#### **Poems**

#### Maa

Bhagwan ka dusara roop hai maa
Un ke liye de denge jaan
Humko milta jivan usase
Kadmo mein swarg guske
Sanskar wo hamein sikhate
Acha bura wo hame batati
Hamari galti ko wo sudharati
Pyar woh hum par barsati
Tabiyat agar ho jaye kharab
Raat raat bhar jagte rehana.

Name- Afsana Shaikh

**Age:** 12 years **Area**: Mumbai

#### Maa

Maa bina jivan hai adhura
Khali khali Suna Suna
Khana pahele hame khilati
Baad Mein woh khud hai khati
Hamari khushi mein khush ho jati
Dukh mein hamare aansu bahati
Kitne khushnasib hai hum
Pass hamare hai maa
Hote badnasib woh kitne
Jinke pass na hoti maa.

Name- Shabana Shaikh

**Age:** 14 years **Area**: Mumbai



### **Red Light Despatch**

Gate 3/4, Second Floor, Editor: Ruchira Gupta

India International Centre

Lodhi Estate, New Delhi

Campus, 40, Max Muller Road, Editorial team: Taw Nana

Publisher: Apne Aap Women Worldwide

Phone:

+9| || 246|9968 RNI Number: DELMUL/2008/27727

E-mail/Web:

contact@apneaap.org Printer: India Enterprises, New Delhi

www.apneaap.org

Organizing communities to end sex trafficking—every woman free, every child in school