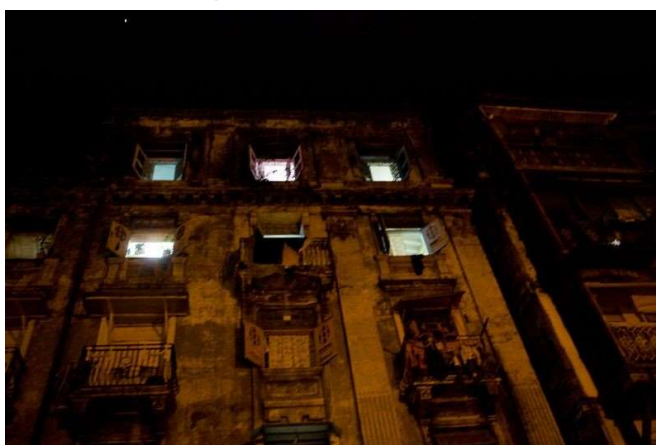




Hi Mercy,

As we mark United Nation's World Day against Trafficking in Persons at the end of this month, we want to reflect on the journey of trafficking victims in the red-light areas (RLA) of Mumbai who took bold decisions to step out and turn their lives around. Take a look!

Ranita Sarma works as a Relationship officer at Oasis India, Bangalore and is passionate about supporting humanitarian issues like child rights. Read her thoughts below on human trafficking.



Human trafficking is a serious global issue. Increasingly referred to as the “modern-day slavery”, human trafficking has stimulated rapid increase of anti-trafficking laws, and has countries devoting resources to eradicate this problem. According to the United Nations

Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), approximately 80% of trafficking of persons across the world is done for sexual exploitation and bonded labour. For this prime reason, Asia is considered as the hub of this crime in the world.

According to UNODC, 76% of people trafficked in the country were women and girls. West Bengal is the highest recorded state with maximum number of cases. As per the statistics of the government, in 2011 about 35,000 children were reported missing and more than 11,000 of them were from West Bengal. Rajasthan stands second in child trafficking and Maharashtra in trafficking of women. Karnataka is the third highest state, being the source and the destination for human trafficking.

So, why is human trafficking increasing in India? With the fundamental theory of demand and supply, men generally migrate to major commercial cities for work and hence, the demand for commercial sex has increased. Another reason is economic injustice and poverty where women and girls born into a poor family are at higher risk of being sold or lured into 'easy money', especially in North-East India. The other known causes are social inequality, gender preferences, corruption, forced marriages and bonded labour.

In the reality of trafficking, many victims are lost in the brutality of the system while others find solace in death. Victims experience emotional, physical and psychological trauma while undergoing the phases of trafficking: recruitment, transport and exploitation. They also experience lack of sleep, lack of control, limited freedom, limited medical facilities, lack of control over clientele, intensity of working hours, and lack of choice in choosing an alternate path of living life. They deal with threats of harm which spurs a great deal of mental health issues such as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

Understanding the cruelty and viciousness of trafficking, it is important to ask the question 'why does trafficking in persons happen in the first place and how it leads to human insecurity?' The intensity of this barbarity also needs to be taken into account to stop trafficking.

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At just 14, Janita\* was married and had a child. The legal age for a girl to marry in India is 18 – marriages below that age are considered child marriage. But over the years child marriage in India has become a form of human trafficking. After Janita's husband left her, she met someone who was kind and understanding. She was in love and she decided to move in with him in Mumbai. But little did she know that he would bring her to one of the most notorious red-light areas in Mumbai and sell her.

Fast forward to 11 years and here is Janita working in an NGO as part of the outreach team after leaving the red-light area. What was her motivation? Her 15-year-old daughter.

Janita knew she had to move out to give her daughter a better education and life. She is also an active member in all the activities that we do in the Kamathipura hub. We asked her what she wanted to accomplish in life and she said, “I want my daughter to complete her education and live a happy life.” She is a fierce mother with a heart full of dreams for her daughter.

\*name changed

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## PROGRAMMES AT OASIS FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND MEN FROM THE RLAs



- Nirmal Bhavan, a rehabilitation center
- Livelihood Training
- Literacy Training
- Vocational Tailoring Course
- MumBA1 Hairstyling Course
- Drop-in Center for counselling and guidance
- Job placement
- After-school Programme for children
- Sports Training
- Night Shelter for women and children
- Early Encounter Programme to rescue vulnerable children
- Change Agents group

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“No matter how disappointing you believe your life currently is, it is never too late to start reshaping it to become an amazing testimony.” ~ Edmond Mbiaka

Women and men that we have worked with from the RLAs speak out on how they have found happiness after leaving the sex trade.



“You’re never too old or too damaged to make a difference. I live a happy life with my daughter now. I have put my past behind me. I am currently enrolled in the nursing training and I also earn well at my job which helps in supporting my family ”

Shrija\*

\*name changed

“I’m not who I was. I evolve everyday. Everyday is a new beginning and I’m happy that I am the woman that I was meant to be today. I am exhilarated to celebrate my birthday with my son for the first time ever.”

Rashmi\*

\*name changed



"I attended the life skill sessions at Oasis and that helped me leave the RLA. I went back to my home town and started farming. I would like to learn driving and start making a living here in Mumbai."

Sadvesh\*

\*name changed





Ramesh\* was an excellent student at his school in Jharkhand but he often saw his friends returning from Mumbai with expensive clothes and mobile phones. He was so amused by it that he wanted the same. So he went to Mumbai and became a pimp.

When we met Ramesh during our outreach where we meet sex workers and pimps at the brothels, he was hesitant to talk but eventually he attended our awareness programmes. He regularly attended our life skill sessions and during one of those sessions he felt immense guilt about everything he was involved in. Ramesh finally decided to leave the RLA. He left for his village in Jharkhand where he now does a small scale business.

\*name changed

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“Self-transformation is not just about changing yourself. It means shifting yourself to a completely new dimension of experience and perception.” ~ Jaggi Vasudev

We are proud of each and every one of the women and men from the RLA who stepped beyond their fear and into new beginnings. You can be a part of that transformation by shedding light on this social evil.



HOW CAN YOU HELP?



You can ride to #MakeTraffickingHistory at Mukthi Bike Challenge 2019

Sign up today!

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