



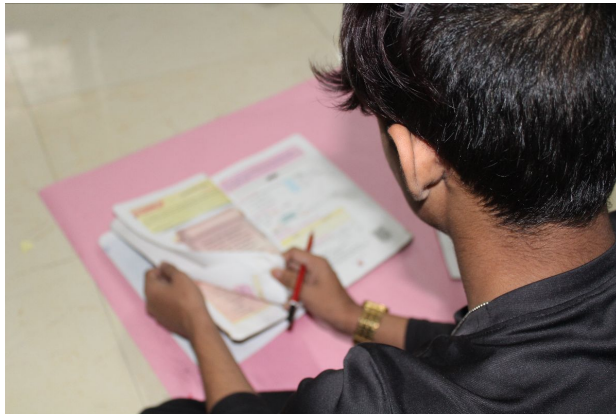
Art by children from the after-school programme in Chennai, India



Inclusion | July 2020

Dear all,

July 30th is United Nations' World Day Against Trafficking in Persons and we are committed to dedicating this month to spread awareness on not just trafficking but also on the desperate state of women and children from the red-light area, during this COVID-19 pandemic. Here are some facts, articles and heart wrenching stories from the field.



In Mumbai, we work in the notorious red-light areas reaching out to women and children providing counselling, rehabilitation and protection through our different programmes. To know more about our work please read this article written by Anya Ago, a blogger with a passion to inspire others.

Oasis In Mumbai

Imagine finally leaving your traumatic life to have a new beginning. Hopeful right? Razia* and Latha* moved out of the red-light area with the same hope and then the lockdown during the pandemic hit them hard. Read their story.



I am Razia from Kamathipura, a red-light area in Mumbai. Latha is my friend from Grant Road which is also a red-light area. We were exploited there and we faced many challenges in our lives. Due to the police raids, there were no new customers and we were left with little to no income. So Latha and I decided to move to Badlapur with her baby. I was very happy because I lived my life in the brothels and I was hoping that now it will be a trouble-free and joyful life.

We finally started our life in Badlapur where everything was new to us. Suddenly there was a long lockdown due to COVID-19. I had some savings left with which we managed for a few days. After we ran out of money, it was very difficult for us. We did not know anyone who could help us as we were new to this place. I was worried for Latha's daughter because there was nothing for us to eat at home. It was very difficult to even get one meal a day. When we could not go on anymore, I remembered my friends at Oasis India.

I knew one Oasis staff who often came on outreach to the red-light area and I contacted her. I shared the difficulty that we were facing. They arranged for provisions and ration on the same day and I was really overwhelmed. We managed with this provision for a month. Oasis family helped us twice and supported us during this lockdown.

*names changed

This is also the story of several other women in the red-light area and those that left to have a fresh start. They are all daily wagers and this lockdown has left them with no food and income. **We provided dry ration and daily essentials to over 1117 families of those who are part of our programmes and also for migrants, transgenders, women and children from the red-light areas in Mumbai.**

If you missed out on our article about the state of women in the brothels during this pandemic and their future post pandemic, do take a look!

[Read here](#)



Sheena* was married at just 17 years of age. She was very young with two daughters when her husband left them to remarry. In an effort to find her husband, she took her two children and went to Bangalore. In the railway station, two men approached her and promised domestic work in Mumbai. Sheena knew she had to take care of her children, so she agreed to travel with them. Little did she know, that these men would sell her and her children to a pimp in Mumbai. Trafficking is very real. Traffickers spot individuals who are vulnerable and manipulate them with love and care. It is therefore important to be aware about the signs of trafficking.

Sheena endured 5 years of abuse and torture in the hands of the pimp and the customers. She did not receive any money and was forced to stay in the brothel with her two small children. Finally they were rescued by an organisation and brought back to their hometown. Her children were placed in foster homes for safety. This is when Sheena was tested HIV+ and was placed in different hostels and rehabilitation centers in the course of the year.

Sheena moved back in to take care of her sick father. Later that year, he succumbed

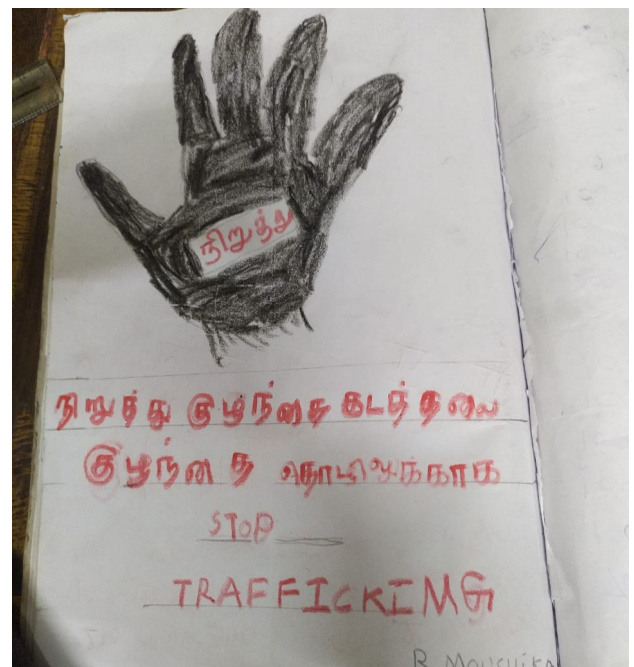
to his illness and again Sheena was left with nothing but loneliness. With a hope to find help, she came back to Bangalore. This is when the pandemic hit and she was stuck with no place to stay. We at Oasis, stepped in to assist with Sheena's overall well-being. Since she is HIV+, her health was deteriorating fast and she was in need of consistent health care. We took her on hospital visits, got her medications and also placed her in a shelter home where she receives counselling and guidance. Sheena is living with the hopes of getting well and meeting her children one day.

*name changed

Anti-human trafficking is the key focus in all of our programmes across India. We have been educating our beneficiaries on what trafficking is and how to prevent it. Here are some art work done by the children from the after-school programme during these sessions.



Art work by children from the after-school programme in Hallegudadhahalli,
Bangalore



Art work by children from the after-school programme in Basin Bridge, Chennai

Translation: 'Stop trafficking children for child labour. Stop trafficking.'



Art work by children from the after-school programme in Muthukur, Punganur



FROM THE RED-LIGHT AREA TO FINDING LOVE!

#MomentsOfHope

Noor* lived with her mother in Kamathipura, one of the largest red-light areas of Mumbai. Several girls who are born or raised in the red-light areas resort into the same trade as their mothers. As the eldest in her family, Noor also had the responsibility of taking care of the family on her shoulders. Noor's mother was afraid for her daughter as she got older. She met with our staff at Kamathipura and requested them to help Noor join a hostel. This is when she was placed in Nirmal Bhavan, our rehabilitation home for women who leave the red-light area. Noor was part of our vocational tailoring programme there and after completing this training successfully, she started working, saving the money and even took care of her parents and three siblings.

In 2016, Noor met the guy of her dreams and they fell in love. They both finally decided to get married and tied the knot in the presence of a few family members last week! This is indeed a modern day fairytale.

When the lives of thousands of young girls have been ruined in the red-light area, Noor's story stands as a lighthouse of hope for many.

*names changed



Have you heard of cyber trafficking?

When trafficking is committed with the use of Internet, it is called “cyber-trafficking.” Child trafficking, cyber bullying, pornography, etc are all cyber crimes that are now greatly prevalent among children in India. As children are spending more time online now than ever, many are unsupervised. Since the strict lockdown was imposed in India, there has been a 95% increase in the usage of porn sites and a large content of pornography viewed online are of trafficked and exploited children. With every child pornography video made and viewed, a child has been abused. The individuals who consume this content will most likely normalise this kind of behaviour and violation of children.

According to Europol's report on 'Pandemic Profiteering,' it is stated that there is an increase in online activity by those seeking child abuse material globally. The report found a strong connection between this increased activity online with that of the online postings by offenders on different forums. Trafficking is often associated with those that are poor and vulnerable but cyber trafficking does not only target those from the lower strata of the society. Everyone with an internet connection and a smart phone is vulnerable, irrespective of their economic status in the country.

While we actively protect our children from the coronavirus, we should also protect them from predators looking to groom children online and traffic or abuse them. So how can we protect our children? Here are a few simple pointers for parents:

- Make the best use of parental control and supervision. Track child's daily online activity.
 - Make all your social media accounts private and/or supervise your child's online activity.
 - If your child receives any unwanted contact from strangers delete the chat and block the individual immediately.
 - Educate your child on cyber crimes and prevention methods.
 - Build an open and trusting relationship with your child.
 - Grow their interest in more offline activities.
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CONVERSATIONS LEAD TO
LEARNING
FOLLOWED BY ACTION

If you would like to host us at your online gatherings at office, schools or colleges to educate your pals on human trafficking, get in touch with us!

Email us

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